

Jörmungandr

A Study in Global Human Trafficking and
Abolitionist Strategy

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“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

“The best way to keep a prisoner from escaping is to make sure he never knows he’s in prison.”

—Fyodor Dostoevsky

This book and all future volumes of Jörmungandr are dedicated to Naomi “Bluebird” Flemming-Zarnowski, my beloved wife who was taken from this world too soon. May your memory burn as brightly as you did – this work would not have been possible without your help and guidance.
(23 January 1983 – 20 July 2011)
Also, in honor of Abdul M. and family – I am so, so sorry for what you have endured. I have never, nor will I ever, forget you.

Acknowledgements

This was in many ways a collaborative project that I got to slap my name on at the end as author. There are so many people to whom I am grateful for their assistance in making this tome a reality that I must limit myself from making this a volume of thanks and gratitude in and of itself. However, there are a few people who deserve special mention.

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To my mother, Becky Zarnowski, a similar debt is owed. Thank you for continuing to believe in me, even when I had lost faith in myself. I can never repay the way you listened without judgment to the endless horrors that I recounted night after drunken night or took care of me when I would have rather wasted away. If it were not for you, I don’t think I would be here today. Thank you.

In a similar vein I must mention Lt. Col. (Ret.) Reg McCutcheon. Reg, you saved me from myself – I don’t think I’d still be here and able to work on this issue if you hadn’t intervened. Thank you for setting me straight.

To Katya of C., Ukraine: Hang in there. I am sorry for how long it has taken me to get my affairs in order. But I made you a promise and I intend to keep it. After Naomi passed, I didn’t think I could ever feel love again until I met you. I still remember that day: despite a column of Russian armor kilometers long bearing down on your location, you steadfastly refused to leave your home, instead merely seeking a friend to talk with, come whatever may. Your strength and resolve were truly endearing. I have loved you ever since, and I always will. I hope that you, Dad, and Granny are safe and well. May every dream that we ever shared come true for you, and may you have the life that I never could.

To another dear friend and one of my survivor consultants for this book, Kristin Vaughn: you are a true hero in every sense of the word. I cannot hope to duplicate your experiences or your contributions; instead, I hope that your words find resonance throughout these pages, as your voice needs to be heard above all of ours. I love you little sister, and I am so proud of you and all that you have done. Be careful – there are more betrayals ahead of us, including by people very close to us.

To Lavender, thank you. Simply, thank you. You really are perfect.

To Josh Eckstein, thank you for reminding me of why I got started in this field to

begin with. You are among the best and brightest of our future and you represent the next generation of this fight. I only pray that you do not see the same kind of horrors that I have.

Likewise, it would be a crime to not mention Matt Richardson here. Matt, I can't thank you enough for your friendship and for getting me through those dark times – especially the Covid hallucinations. Your work protecting children across the globe is incredible, with your investigations into the perpetrators of sextortion being highly influential in the writing of this book. I hope to one day match your contributions. In recognition of how much you mean to me and mine, I won't even make a joke about Canada here.

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Martin Steindal of the Norwegian Armed Forces: Thank you for the help with that ... thing that you helped with. I believe I owe you, at last count, precisely 24 beers.

Yolanda Heartly: Thank you for continuing to be my friend after all these years, especially after I disappeared. Not many people from that time in my life have stayed by my side – least of all this side of the veil. The last time I went to play paintball with your husband was also the last time I can say I had a normal life; I cherish those memories deeply. I hope that you both can read between the lines of this book and find the answers that you deserve. Once again, I find myself biting my tongue on a good Canada joke.

I must also thank Dr. Laurence “Casey” Jones, formerly of Angelo State University, and to whom I still owe a Scope and Methods paper. I haven't forgotten even after all these years, Dr. Jones. Some other things just sort of came up and took my attention away from your class, as you now know. In lieu of a paper, would you consider a book?

To “Brian,” the very naughty boy of a Messiah, I owe you a debt for confirming what I saw and assuring me that I wasn't, in fact, insane – although I must confess that the more you confirmed, I truly began to wish that I was indeed madder than a hatter. What's more is that I feel as if you're the only other person on the planet who understands how my brain works sometimes – which admittedly concerns me due to reasons that should be obvious to one as enlightened as yourself. This process has been exhausting; next time we will both know to demand payment up front. So much of what has been done, and even what is written here, is ultimately your work. I am merely what I have always been: far from a great thinker, but rather merely a triggerman. Thank you for your incredibly valuable contributions to this book. You deserve much more credit than a mere acknowledgement, but attributing credit to a spy who is still very much in the game is admittedly a fickle matter. Here's to a new world where neither of us have to do this anymore.

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To Tim Robinson: You helped remind me of who I really am, and that there is life

after the CIA. Thank you. For what it's worth, I am really sorry that I ordered a cruise missile strike from the ground floor flex office. That was not very customer-oriented of me. I can only imagine how that impacted my metrics for that month. In my defense, I was technically on my break.

To Gus, who was, and is, a good owl. You were far more than you ever let on.

Special thanks are also due to the “Costa Rica People,” of whom I hope this is a sufficiently vague description. Absolutely none of this would have been possible without your extensive insight, guidance, and support. I am in your debt, even if I do not quite know who or even what I am exactly indebted to.

Many scholars influenced the creation of this work and also deserve special recognition. Siddharth Kara's and Kevin Bales' scholarship laid the foundation for this work, and I built heavily off of these what these legends documented across the world. Stephanie Hepburn and Rita Simon's 2013 work *Human Trafficking Around the World: Hidden in Plain Sight* was fundamental in providing the global framework for my approach, while Louise Shelley's *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* helped seal these connections and gave me the insight to examine the problem from a perspective of a transnational crime network. Sarah Kendzior's scholarship documented in such works as 2022's *They Knew: How a Culture of Conspiracy Keeps America Complacent* was the quintessential work for formulating my approach to sorting fact from the vast amount of misinformation that this issue is inundated with. In this vein I also drew significantly from the writings of Timothy Snyder, Anne Applebaum, and Hannah Arendt – Arendt's work in particular was essential in bringing my attention to larger societal trends and their relevance to the phenomena I was examining.

Raleigh Sadler's 2019 masterpiece *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking* was critical in formulating my approach and analysis of the issue of human trafficking from a risk factors perspective. Similarly, I would have missed a great many connections among the phenomena of slavery, eugenics, and genocide had it not been for the scholarship and efforts of Dr. Gregory Stanton, founder of Genocide Watch, whom I had the distinct honor of speaking alongside in the Hague in 2022. Similar thanks are owed to Dr. Athena Ives: Marine Lioness, forensic psychologist, and author of the 2018 book, *Thank You for Raping Me: A Marine's Story of Resilience and Hope*. Dr. Ives' insight into the issues discussed in this book were essential in my initial formulation of how I wanted to approach my research, and her camaraderie helped give me reassurance that I was on the right track. Similarly, the research and aid of Carolina Christofolletti, a true “Angel of Death” when it comes to dealing with pedophiles, was essential in analyzing the behavior of predators who specifically target children.

I would also like to thank all those in my life and in passing who look through these pages and wonder if I am writing about them. Rest assured, I am.

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Introduction

“In college I was a conspiracy theorist. I believed that behind the chaos, there must be some secret group of geniuses that could save the world. But look at these idiots.”

– Ron Staedtler, *Inside Job*

“If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don’t see.”

– James Baldwin

Many Americans assume that the issue of slavery has been relegated to the past, or, at the very least, that it is a phenomenon that has been relegated to faraway places in the so-called “third-world.” Unfortunately, the reality could not be further from the truth: slavery still persists in modern America, and it surrounds us in ways few can initially imagine. A significant reason why this “out of sight, out of mind” cognitive process occurs is due to the euphemistic language that is used to describe the problem: slavery isn’t called “slavery” anymore, but rather *modern* slavery or, much more commonly, *human trafficking*. Such terminology serves to take away the emotional weight behind the word “slavery,” implying that what is occurring isn’t as horrifying or as grotesque as it really is.

Yet, I feel that I am very quickly getting ahead of myself. Let’s take a step back and examine the issue of what the reader is likely familiar with under the term “human trafficking.”

Working to combat human trafficking can be likened to the millennial and GenZ experience. First you are born, and as a small child perfectly innocent and full of God’s grace, you don’t really know what you’re doing, where you’re going, or why you’re in a handbasket, let alone who put you there. As you grow into a teenager, you go through a lengthy rebellious phase when you realize that the world is a dark, dark place and that all the fairy tales your parents told you about the world when you were younger were, in fact, bald-faced lies. Finally, you reach adulthood: you still don’t know what the hell you’re doing, but it’s incredibly clear that nobody else does either, certainly not the people in charge of things, so you at least have that realization to comfort you as you allow yourself to dissociate over your cold ramen (hot ramen, of course, requires electricity, and that’s a luxury you just can’t afford). This feeling is made worse due to

the unbelievably complex nature of the problem, rampant misinformation, a critical lack of data, moral panics, and a general lack of awareness of the issue, all combined with the competing interests, ideologies, and motivations found in the anti-trafficking community.

While I had been aware of this general pattern in the field for a while, the whole grim reality was first truly thrust upon me at a local anti-trafficking coalition meeting at which the head of the national FBI Task Force on Human Trafficking had been invited to speak. It was truly an honor to have someone of such repute present, and I was looking forward to hearing what he had to say. Both he and another FBI analyst were present, and everything started off relatively well – but then I noticed something: he started repeating *myths* about trafficking, things that the FBI, let alone a senior FBI official, should know better than to present as fact.

Things only got worse from there. Before long, I found myself messaging a colleague that I had invited to this meeting specifically to hear the director of this illustrious and highly regarded task force: *They have no clue what they're doing, do they?*

The general consensus of those present was that there was so much nonsense put forth in that short, fifteen-minute presentation that we were genuinely concerned that a Russian Ambassador had mistakenly shown up instead of a highly respected FBI official. To say that I was alarmed was an understatement; my prior involvement with officials at top federal agencies such as the Department of Justice and the FBI had given me the overall impression of not just general competence, but of utmost expertise. While I had long understood that local policing largely relied upon the good guys being only somewhat more knowledgeable than the average bad guy (which, to be frank, really isn't that hard at all) I had simply assumed federal law enforcement was of a much higher caliber.

I was clearly wrong, at least as far as expertise in human trafficking was concerned.

About a year later I was invited to participate in an effort to identify potential victims of sex trafficking for a triple letter agency in advance of a major sporting event. It was an opportunity to disrupt major trafficking operations in a region of the country that rarely received any attention despite being a known hotspot for sex trafficking, and to hopefully identify some victims and get them the resources they needed to escape their situation. So naturally, I jumped at the opportunity when my handler presented it to me. And we met with great success: we identified a large number of victims as well as a vast interstate ring that was trafficking Asian women across the country. We were told that the victims were getting aid and most weren't being arrested but were rather being treated as victims – a rarity in the anti-trafficking world – and we were all generally made to feel good about what we had done.

Imagine my surprise, then, when the FBI announced the results of their annual Operation Cross Country a few months later, which included details of many of the cases and victims I had identified for the contracting agency. The only difference was that the victims hadn't exactly been helped; rather, the FBI had arrested and charged them with a variety of crimes. In fact, when we examined the numbers of victims and perpetrators provided in the FBI release, we found that some victims that I had identified had not only been arrested for merely being victims of sex trafficking, but were counted as both “victims recovered” and as “traffickers arrested” at the same time – including several that were children.

It seems that the contracting agency, presented with more cases of trafficking than

their small field office could handle, took our findings about victims of sex trafficking to the larger FBI. This was appropriate, and the triple letter agency we were working for did nothing wrong in this case other than having only a small, understaffed field office dedicated to the issue. Yet, while those individuals identified as victims continued to be horrifically traumatized, the FBI neglected to assist them, instead opting to kick in the door a few months later and heroically “rescue” the victims while arresting the evil traffickers over a period of several days to great public acclaim – “traffickers” who, as I just noted, were often the very same people who were being horrifically exploited. So-called “traffickers” who were *children*.

This is a perfect example of the all-too-ugly reality of the fight against human trafficking. Many so-called experts seem to not really know what they’re doing, and what’s being done often isn’t as helpful as claimed. Despite the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and the United Nations Palermo Protocol having been passed over twenty years ago, we have made shockingly little progress in addressing human trafficking. A large part of this is due to the nature of human trafficking and the social and cultural origins of modern slavery: as a general rule, people are reluctant to discuss these realities and the unpleasant truths behind human trafficking. Of course, everyone says they’re greatly opposed to human trafficking – polls show this repeatedly and talking about sex trafficking is an easy way to get likes and attention on social media – but the lack of concrete action behind this virtue signaling is much more telling. As someone who has dedicated much of his life to essential facts and truths, no matter how unpleasant or unpopular they may be, I have encountered this frustrating fact again and again, but never with such high stakes as those involving modern slavery. The problem, succinctly stated, is this: people will kill themselves for a beautiful lie much sooner than they will live for an ugly truth. In turn, truth-tellers themselves find it far more likely to be burned at the stake as heretical troublemakers than be viewed as the prophets of foresight that they are.

Slavery is ancient, and it is precisely because it is ancient that it is so hard for human societies to shake loose from its hypnotic, gravitational pull. Human trafficking, modern slavery, or whatever else one wants to call it is firmly rooted and extremely entrenched in every aspect of our so-called “modern” societies, our most sincerely held beliefs, and our most sacred traditions, and it will take tremendous effort to uproot it. It is a complex issue that is difficult to accurately comprehend. There are no easy answers presented in this book: and given the complexity of the issue, this is merely the first of four volumes I plan to write examining in depth the various compounding aspects of this problem.

There is a distinct narrative present regarding human trafficking that is not based on facts, and this is part of what I set out to correct in this work: to simply cut through the BS. As a former colleague of mine in this field recently said, there simply comes a time when a man must spit on his hands and hoist the black flag, speaking unpleasant truths to power if we are to truly get anything done; because, at present, we’re sitting around having the same conversations around the very same tables with the very same people that we were five, ten, or even twenty years ago. Almost as if on cue to highlight the importance of my work, this very same former colleague of mine – an otherwise highly respected member of senior law enforcement – has since been found to have isolated, drugged, and raped survivors of human trafficking, at anti-trafficking conferences no less, thus exemplifying the truly insidious nature and the full scope of the problem we

face. Clearly, it's far past time that things change and that the systems in place be recognized for what they are. I can attest to these facts perhaps more than most, having been in this fight in one form or another since I was sixteen. I've been around a while and let me tell you: nothing's changing.

This is largely because, again, human trafficking is perhaps one of the most poorly understood phenomena in the world. It is both a very real, horrific atrocity that affects millions the world over, and yet at the same time it remains a boogeyman that is deployed to scare the paranoid public whenever political or societal forces demand that they be terrified into mass hysteria. Someone desperately needs to separate fact from fiction while also holding to account those responsible for the blurring of conspiracy theory and reality. A more comprehensive examination of the issue is warranted, one that is much more exhaustive than those to date have been. While trafficking can happen to anyone, a fact that gets repeated ad nauseum in the literature to the point of obfuscating the larger picture, certain populations are more predisposed than others to experience trafficking. This work focuses on these larger trends rather than the exceptions that often dominate popular literature on the subject. Similarly, I focus on wide-scale data and populations rather than specific cases meant to manipulate the reader's emotions as is the omnipresent tactic in the popular literature, although case studies are provided to illustrate how trends present themselves in real-world settings.

Much to this point, the reader will find that I write only about what I can support with clear and explicit evidence. As a professionally trained investigator, I know the difference between merely knowing something and proving it beyond a reasonable doubt. Moreover, this is simply just good practice, especially in a time when society's definition of "truth" appears to be in flux. But much more importantly, popular literature about human trafficking, and even much academic literature about the subject, is ripe with blatant falsehoods, half-baked statistics, and rampant conspiracy theories. A truly evidence-based approach is needed in this field, and the fact that I can fully back up my claims also serves the purpose of protecting me from frivolous defamation lawsuits filed by those I write about. That last sentence may be taken as a warning to those who might adopt such tactics: I have the receipts for what I claim, and I am more than happy to release the goods if challenged.

Attempts to silence whistleblowers aside, the socially unspeakable reality is that human trafficking underlies most forms of crime and is intimately linked to societal issues such as inequality and homelessness. The startling implication that many criminals are not acting out of any malicious intent to harm society but are themselves being trafficked to commit crimes at the coercion of others has immense implications for the fields of criminal justice and criminology and is one that few in the field seem willing to acknowledge, let alone actually grapple with in a serious manner. At the same time, a great deal can be understood about human society and the issues affecting the world by examining human trafficking in detail, from cycles of poverty to how nation states interact and even wage war against one another.

This is *Jörmungandr* : human trafficking and modern slavery is the insidious world serpent that connects many diverse issues, but it is itself a twisted knot of interconnected forces, all of which give and take as they contort their way through humanity's common existence, intersecting in some truly surprising ways. Thus, this work is not merely about human trafficking, but has far wider implications about trauma, violence, their

downstream effects, and how this is all normalized in various cultures, past and present. The end result is nothing short of an absolute paradigm shift that very few want to discuss; however, we desperately need to have these discussions to bring any change to fruition.

The analogy to a tangled, writhing serpent is particularly apt when it comes to understanding the interconnectedness of these issues and the cyclical, compounding reinforcement they exert on one another. Trauma is directly correlated to one's risk for substance abuse, for example, and substance abuse tends to predispose one to even more trauma. Migrant status is directly correlated with one's risk of experiencing labor trafficking, and yet at the same time, experiencing labor trafficking or other exploitation increases the odds of becoming a migrant to escape one's situation. Issues of education, national security, famine and climate change, psychology and sociology, and countless other factors all similarly coalesce around individuals and societies. These issues all compound each other, making it difficult to determine where one factor begins and another ends: are we safely reaching for the snake's tail to finally get hold of this issue, or are we reaching out only to meet a pair of fangs once more?

Given this entanglement of societal ills, I must also discuss my methodology. I set out not to write a book but rather to simply understand the phenomenon of human trafficking for myself so I could better tackle the problem. I began by listing various aspects of the problem in a sort of mind map, only loosely sorting them before beginning to fill in details and examples of what I had learned about each of them in my career, much like an intelligence analyst adopting a political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure (PMESII) model of a target. Many of these facets had become apparent to me over a decade ago when I first became active in this field and I had wanted to attempt a large-scale study of this kind ever since, but for various personal reasons had never been able to dedicate myself to the proper research. Yet, a surprising amount became apparent to me only as I pursued my research – much of which came as a complete surprise to me and, admittedly, resulted in many unhealthy coping mechanisms as I wrestled with their implications and the sheer scope of what I was ultimately looking at. I didn't have a plan to write a book when I first started this project, but what I discovered necessitates that I do so if we are to have any chance of altering the path that we as a greater human society are on.

In sum, this work is the result of well over eighteen years of experience combatting human trafficking and modern slavery in all its myriad forms, and two full years of dedicated research and scholarship into the inner workings and dynamics of trafficking in persons. To be clear, there is admittedly a strong bias in this work toward the specific trafficking dynamics in the United States. That can't be helped since I am an American, working on this issue in America, all while living in – you guessed it – the United States. However, trafficking in America cannot be understood without a great deal of global context, which this work also provides. Human trafficking and modern slavery are global problems, and ones that are terrifyingly universal to societies across the world. This work's emphasis on the dynamics of trafficking in the United States should not detract from this point, but rather serve as a blueprint to study the topic in other countries and cultures outside the United States. Moreover, I must caution the reader against solely condemning the United States because of this bias – while one might be tempted to ask, “what is wrong with America?” the real question one should ask is “what is wrong with

humanity?" I assure the reader that what is applicable to America is applicable to the rest of the world, and the results might be even more unsettling. To this point the reader will find that I have dedicated a great deal of effort to ensuring that my approach is both replicable and applicable to other societies besides that of the modern United States of America.

As part of the research process, I have made extensive references to sources and I have also made recommendations as to where additional relevant information may be found. Supplemental materials and documentation accompany each chapter (see Appendix 1), as do extensive citations. While I have tried my best to effectively summarize the literature, I simply could not review everything there is to know about this subject, and I am acutely aware of my own biases and limitations. Thus, I focused on what I felt were the most important topics, the most misunderstood subjects, the cultural, political, economic, and social phenomena that gave rise to and continue to perpetuate cycles of slavery, as well as the most common problems I've encountered while working in this field. When it comes to human trafficking and the subjugation of the *other*, context is key, and the supplementary resources listed are vital to understand how the pieces connect and reinforce each other. Additionally, this should aid in making the material presented more accessible and adaptable for use in academic settings.

This admittedly complicated structure is part by necessity and part by design; by necessity because of the complexity of the issue and how the topic of slavery and the ways that human beings subjugate each other connects to literally every other aspect of human existence. By design, this serves yet another purpose: to protect the reader from secondary trauma and moral injury. This subject matter is disturbing, and the reader is advised to read it slowly over time to allow one's mind time to cope with the sheer scale of the atrocities described. It was Nietzsche who wrote that he who hunts monsters must be careful not to become a monster himself, and that when one stares into the abyss, the abyss stares back. When I first glanced upon those words in a freshman philosophy class, I knew there was wisdom to them but didn't give them much thought. Two decades later, and now having regularly-scheduled coffee dates with the abyss, I wish I had taken Nietzsche's warning more seriously. Thus, I have a duty to protect the reader from becoming, well, *me*.

Further still, I do not propose that this work is the be-all, end-all of human trafficking research or the key to unraveling the phenomena of modern slavery: rather, it is merely the *beginning*, and is meant to serve as a guidepost to a freer, more democratic future and to inspire further research and development into how we can make our world a more fair, equal, and healthy place. There are countless storylines buried within the additional reference material: tales that need to be told, threads to be unraveled, and investigations to be launched that I cannot discuss in this volume due to time and length limitations. Moreover, examining and dissecting methods of enslavement and the way human beings subjugate each other reveals something...*more* about the human condition, not to mention the world around us, than one would ever suspect.

One cannot hope to fight what one does not understand. Generals from the present day all the way back to Sun Tzu have made this observation as being fundamental to winning any conflict. The FBI, the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and even the CIA and all their foreign and international counterparts have declared human trafficking to be one of the greatest, if

not the greatest, threats to national security, public health, and human rights facing the globe today. Yet no one seems to know what precisely they're up against or what to do about it, resulting in the current situation of everyone twiddling their thumbs while we have the same conversations over and over again. This, in turn – which may or may not surprise the reader – is the source of many of the world's societal ills.

Historically speaking, when the intelligence community misses something like this, a lot of innocent people tend to die. Pearl Harbor. 9/11. January 6th. The October 2023 Hamas incursion into Israel. The list, sadly, goes on. Yet, the issue of trafficking doesn't merely threaten thousands of lives in one particular area of the world: it threatens millions all across the globe, and it stretches to the very foundations of civilization.

Thus, the sole inspiration behind this book: *to know thy enemy*. Because if we don't know what it is we're up against, we have absolutely no chance in hell of defeating it. And to be frank, we're kind of getting our asses kicked right now, and I'm beyond sick and tired of burying good men, women, and children because of it. No human being should ever have to attend the number of funerals that I have been to or see the unspeakable horrors that I have borne witness to; to call this dystopia "civilization" is a joke that I can no longer laugh at.

Yet, as I sit down to put these thoughts and observations to paper, I find that this work is to serve yet another crucial purpose: to *bear witness*. While Dwight Eisenhower dedicated countless hours to studying his much-hated opponent in World War II, he was nonetheless wholly unprepared for the horrors that awaited him upon the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. Upon witnessing the dreads of the Holocaust he swiftly ordered his troops, "get it all on record now – get the films, get the witnesses – because somewhere down the track of history some bastard will get up and say that this never happened."

Like Eisenhower, I, too, realize the historic times I find myself in. As a student of history, I know that history repeats itself just as my training as an intelligence analyst allows me to realize where these trends and patterns lead – and it is not to a good place. While history may tend to repeat itself, it may not have the opportunity to do so for much longer if current trends are not reversed. I am far from alone in this realization and, just as Ike predicted, many bastards did get up and pretend this has never happened before. What surprises me, however, is the grim reality that few, if any, have yet realized: that historical chattel slavery and modern human trafficking are all deeply interwoven into this tapestry of oppression and are, in fact, connected to each and every issue of modern political import that the reader is familiar with. It is far past time for this to be acknowledged and addressed as the one singular issue that it is.

Lastly, I realize only upon review that this collection is, quite unintentionally, about evil and the nature of evil. Evil, much like human trafficking, is complicated – and because it is complicated, it is naturally quite unpleasant to comprehend. Likewise, part of the problem confronting us with the problems of human trafficking and the nature of evil is that the sum of the whole is simply greater than its components. Nothing is ever a matter of "good guys" versus "bad guys;" such polarity makes for simple plot lines in movies, but real life is never so neat. The "good guys" rarely act out of complete benevolence, and "bad guys" genuinely have their reasons for doing what they do, points which are extensively documented in this book. Evil, then, is subtle; it's often the accumulation of small errors and misjudgments made by people who are generally doing

their best and don't mean to cause harm. As Hannah Arendt has written, "the sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil."

I contend, or rather, the sum of the research indicates, that the argument must be taken a step further: much of the problem comes from people genuinely trying to do the right thing. The road to hell, after all, is paved with good intentions.

Chapter 1

Defining the Issue

"Coercion is evil precisely because it thus eliminates an individual as a thinking and valuing person and makes him a bare tool in the achievement of the ends of another."

– Friedrich Hayek

What is human trafficking? This is a simple enough question. Yet, if I were to ask this question to any mixture of law enforcement officers, lawyers, legislators, journalists, and anti-trafficking activists, each person would probably give a different response, with varying degrees of clarity and completeness. Part of the problem is that different legal and scholarly sources give different answers to this question while the popular literature on the subject hardly gives a definition at all. Human trafficking is frequently talked about, but it seems that an awful lot of people don't know exactly what it is that they're speaking of. The term gets thrown around in news reports, movies, social media, and television shows, yet when people are asked what *exactly* human trafficking is, they offer a wildly incomplete answer – if they offer anything at all. Moreover, relevant laws and statutes are never cited or discussed in any of the popular literature on the subject.

This is a huge problem. If one cannot even define what one opposes, how is one supposed to take action against it?

Human trafficking is commonly understood in terms of three components: an action, a means, and a purpose. This is known as the AMP model of human trafficking, and it is the model that is easiest for most to understand. When a person *induces, recruits, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains* (an Action) another person through *force, fraud, or coercion* (a Means, by which a person is made to do something against their will) for a specific Purpose, such as *commercial sexual activity or forced labor*, the result is human trafficking (Polaris Project, 2012). This is laid out in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(9), better known as the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act (TVPA) of 2000 where a "severe form of trafficking in persons" is defined as:

"...the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of

use for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.”

Yet, here we encounter our first hiccup with a definition: what constitutes coercion? What is debt bondage? And isn't slavery illegal in the United States already? Didn't we have a whole big civil kerfuffle about that very issue?

Thus, a more detailed explanation and definition is clearly merited, if not outright necessitated. Essential to understanding human trafficking is the issue of coercion, which unfortunately is a problem of nuance and subtlety. Coercion can be hard to detect, and even harder to prove in a court of law (Belles, 2015). Take the sentence, “it would be very unfortunate if something bad happened to your family.” Now, is that a threat or just an observation? One cannot easily tell as it is so ambiguous in its current form. It could certainly be taken as a threat – one could be intending that if you don't do as they wish, something very bad could happen to your family in retaliation. On the other hand, they could simply be stating an opinion: they simply feel that it would, in fact, be a very bad thing if something happened to your family. Either way, good luck proving that in court.

This is part of the core problem with human trafficking cases: coercion is rarely a straightforward matter. Consider the following examples, all of which come up frequently in typical modern slavery cases:

“You want to have something to eat, right?”

“You don't want our child to sleep on the street, do you?” A frequent alternative to this is, “If you don't do it, I'll make our child do it.”

“You'd do it if you really loved me.”

This last one likely hit home for a number of readers for a variety of reasons. The unpleasant reality is that we frequently encounter coercion in our daily lives, from convincing our significant others to merely take the trash out to solicitation of sex in dating activities. This is part of the problem that contributes to the prevalence of human trafficking: coercion is not only everywhere but is in reality so familiar to us that we don't even recognize it half the time. When investigating human trafficking, proving coercion can be exceptionally difficult if the victim/survivor will not testify. Proof of coercion in law often depends on the entirety of circumstances and facts around a case. Legally, according to 22 U.S.C. § 7102(3),

The term ‘coercion’ means:

(A) threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person;

(B) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or

(C) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

The third item is in turn defined by 22 U.S.C. § 7102(1) as

...the use or threatened use of a law or legal process, whether administrative, civil, or criminal, in any manner or for any purpose for which the law was not designed, in order to exert pressure on another person to cause that person to take some action or refrain from taking some action.

The “abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process” is frequently seen in trafficking and abuse cases where the abuser threatens to turn the victim in to the police for prostitution, immigration violations, or other legal concerns as a form of coercive control. This results in trafficking and of the abuse victims being unwilling to speak with law enforcement for fear of arrest.

Yet, we find that we’re still not quite fully done. In terms of coercion, what constitutes “serious harm,” as in “threats of serious harm?” This definition is found in an entirely different statute 18 U.S.C. § 1589 (c)(2):

The term “serious harm” means any harm, whether physical or nonphysical, including psychological, financial, or reputational harm, that is sufficiently serious, under all the surrounding circumstances, to compel a reasonable person of the same background and in the same circumstances to perform or continue performing labor or services in order to avoid incurring that harm.

Coercion is hardly the only term that needs clarification here, thanks to the complicated way in which statutes are written. In fact, human trafficking can take many forms. Sex trafficking, the form of human trafficking that most of the population are familiar with (and arguably the most concerned about) is defined in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(12):

The term “sex trafficking” means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

A “commercial sex act” is further defined in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(4):

The term “commercial sex act” means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Some very important points need to be noted here. First, this statute applies to *any* sex act where anything of value is exchanged. This means that, legalistically speaking at least, prostitution is sex trafficking. While the implications and competing ideologies behind this notion will be discussed in depth in a subsequent volume, the important thing to understand at this juncture is that if an individual exchanges sex for money, *that person is being sex trafficked* under the law. The individual paying for the sex is engaging in the sex trafficking of the individual providing the sex and *should be arrested*. This is not a difficult matter to understand, and yet very few people seem to understand it: especially those in law enforcement. Moreover, the person being sex trafficked is a *victim, and should absolutely NOT be arrested*.

That’s how it works in theory, at least. Much like communism, things look nicer on paper than they do when examined in the harsh lighting of a Stalinist gulag. This is really not the complex issue some make it out to be – at least when it comes to examining *what the law says*. Here’s where the intricacy arises: it is important to note that this is a vast oversimplification of reality in which prostitution and sex trafficking can occur separate from one another, but it nonetheless provides a legal framework for investigators at least to better approach this issue: one in which – again, *theoretically* at least – fewer victims and innocent sex workers are arrested, and one where more pimps and traffickers are taken off the streets.¹ Admittedly, this leads to a lot of confusion, especially where individual agency is concerned as well as peoples’ overly moralistic concerns about what other people (who are mostly women) do with their genitalia, but

this confusion is best addressed in a later volume.

Prostitution is sex trafficking under United States federal law, and under that very same law prostitutes are sex trafficking victims. Per the Supremacy Clause of the United States Constitution, this simple fact overrules all other state and local regulations pertaining to prostitution and sex work.² Those who purchase sex from prostitutes or are responsible for their trafficking (such as pimps and other traffickers) should be arrested and charged with sex trafficking, and those who are made to prostitute themselves for whatever reasons should be provided with resources so as not to be further exploited. In plain and simple terms, that is what the TVPA establishes as the law of the land in all 50 states, and this has been the case since the TVPA went into effect in 2000. This straightforward notion understandably has likely already raised a number of questions (and possibly objections) in the reader's mind, but as author I ask for the reader's patience as we strive to address many of those questions and implications.

Per the definition of a "commercial sex act," any exchange of money constitutes an act of sex trafficking. However, the term "value" must be explored in further detail. "Value" is not strictly limited to financial value, such as money, a stock or bond, or a fancy wristwatch that can be fenced. "Value" legally refers to anything that a person values. For example, food, shelter, and mere survival have all been upheld by courts as having "value" under this definition. Emotional support or a sense of belonging can also qualify and is a particularly common aspect of the grooming process. This plays into the issue of coercion, and how the overall circumstances of a case drive human trafficking dynamics. Likewise, many are surprised to realize that so-called "survival sex," or sex in exchange for mere subsistence is a very real phenomena and is typically the main driving force behind prostitution. It is also a common issue encountered in situations of homelessness.

There is one more notable part of the definition of sex trafficking. Any instance of any person under the age of 18 engaging in a commercial sex act as defined in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(4) is automatically an instance of sex trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion is present.

Full stop.

This is critically important to understand: under the TVPA of 2000, ***there is no such thing as a child prostitute***, as the term "prostitution" implies that consent was present between the parties unless force, fraud, or coercion were present. As far as the law is concerned, prostitution is understood to be a consensual exchange of a commercial sex act for something of value. However, minors cannot consent to engaging in commercial sex acts: thus, such an act is automatically an act of sex trafficking of that minor person. If a minor, defined as a person under the age of eighteen, is found to be or suspected to be engaged in an act of prostitution, that should trigger a ton of alarms and red flags for any responsible adult present, and there should be at least one pedophile behind bars at the end of the day awaiting trial. Yet again, while this appears to be quite the straightforward and commonsensical fact, we'll see that in reality this is the exception, not the norm.

The TVPA gives us four other terms that merit explanation: debt bondage, involuntary servitude, peonage, and slavery.

Debt bondage is legally defined in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(7) as

...the status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of

his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.

Debt bondage occurs in many ways and is comparable to peonage as mentioned in the TVPA. Suppose a man incurs a debt to his employer. The employer then offers him a chance to work off the debt as an employee. However, while on the job the employer finds ways to add to the debt of the employee: he deducts from his pay for every minor expense he can think of, bills him for the heating and air conditioning of the building he works in, bills him for the cleaning supplies that he needs to do his job, so on and so forth. He even charges him for the lunch and other meals that he is required to provide to him on the job, and the housing that he is required to provide him to live on site. At the end of the day, the employee owes more money to his employer than he has earned for his work, keeping him in an inescapable cycle of debt to his employer. This is debt bondage, and it is a frequent method used to facilitate both labor and sex trafficking.

Involuntary servitude is another common form of trafficking, defined in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(8):

The term “involuntary servitude” includes a condition of servitude induced by means of—

(A) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or

(B) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

This is vague for a reason. Involuntary servitude can arise in many circumstances in many different places, from strip clubs to factories to individual homes and domestic settings. The only arguable limit to human trafficking is the human imagination. As one U.S. metropolitan police chief was quoted as saying, “this problem is present in every community and the only way not to find it is to simply not look for it” (Belles, 2015). This will become clear as the reader progresses through this volume and into later ones. Through these definitions, we can see that the TVPA broadly categorizes human trafficking into two categories: sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Yet, is this truly all-encompassing terminology? Moreover, is a legalistic framework for addressing the problem the same as a true definition?

Yes and no. I warned you: this is complicated.

Common Forms of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking exists in many forms beyond those narrowly defined in the TVPA of 2000. This is slightly clarified when one examines the UN Palermo Protocol, but even this expansive document does not cover all forms that this hydra manages to morph into.

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking, or trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, is the form of human trafficking that the reader is most likely familiar with. Sex trafficking gets a lot of media attention, some of which is admittedly justified. Yet, it is hardly representative of

the larger phenomenon of modern-day slavery. There is a tendency to focus on sex trafficking at the expense of all other forms of trafficking, hindering efforts across the board – ironically, even efforts against sex trafficking.

Having noted this, it is absolutely critical that the reader understand that not all sex work equates to a form of sex trafficking: trafficking only occurs when there is the element of coercion present. Theoretically at least, this even holds in cases of prostitution: if a person, free of any and all ulterior influences both external and internal, agrees to have sex with a person in exchange for financial compensation, then that does not constitute trafficking – except as the law currently exists under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, wherein coercion is assumed by default definition. This very significant problem will be addressed in a later volume as we have a great deal to address before we can even touch upon this highly nuanced issue. (See Gerassi, 2015 for a discussion on the competing views). Until then, please note that this work concerns itself with sex *trafficking* – that is, sex work where the element of coercion is, in fact, at play.

To this end, a note about some of my selected terminology in this work is also warranted. There is a well-justified movement to avoid using the word “prostitution/prostitute” when discussing both prostitution and sex trafficking, some of which I will discuss in the first section of this work. Instead, many favor the term “sex worker” over “prostitute” and “sex work” over “prostitution” (and in some cases, even in place of acknowledging that sex trafficking is a real thing). The intent is to reduce the stigmatization that those who engage, either willingly or not, in this work suffer from, and that in turn prevents them from accessing resources and aid that may keep them safe. Unfortunately, this choice of words is hardly reflected universally, especially when one examines topics such as law and academic research. Additionally, sex work is often construed at the same time to involve more than just prostitution, but erotic dancing, various online sexual performances, stripping, and more – and to make matters more complicated, sex trafficking can spill over into all these lines of sex work, not just prostitution as commonly believed. Thus, for accuracy’s sake I refer in this work to prostitution as engaging in sexual intercourse in exchange for money or payment, and sex work as a more wholistic term. My aim is to achieve maximum clarity in terms while possibly suffering some loss of inclusivity.

Labor Trafficking

Labor trafficking, such as through forced labor and debt bondage, is another common form of modern slavery, and includes matters of **child labor**. While we largely understand that more people are enslaved through labor trafficking than sex trafficking, the reality is that we don’t know by how much. This is because labor trafficking is much more difficult to detect than sex trafficking, in part because it is much less visible than sex trafficking. If one observes a teenage girl wearing heavy makeup and high heels while otherwise scantily dressed coming out of a hotel room and getting into the back seat of a vehicle with an older man, one can reasonably ascertain that *something* is amiss. However, one cannot make that same determination, for instance, by merely observing an employee sweeping the floor in a bar. Are they being properly compensated? Are they at the beginning of their shift, or have they been working for twenty hours straight? When was the last time they were allowed to take a break? Are they being made to sleep in a back room or in the attic? When was the last time they had something to eat or

drink, and was this billed against them in a debt bondage scheme? One simply cannot tell, and this makes detection nigh impossible.

Organ Trafficking

Organ trafficking is a particularly heinous and gruesome form of human trafficking, and it is far more common than most care to admit. Many are familiar with the urban legend of the man who mysteriously wakes up in an ice tub missing a kidney. While reality is hardly so dramatic, all myths are based on a kernel of truth. There is, in fact, a substantial reason to believe that the supply of organs used for transplants in the United States and in Europe is heavily contaminated with illegally sourced, trafficked organs (Glazer, 2022; Gutmann, 2014). In instances of organ trafficking, an individual may be coerced into selling an organ such as an eye or kidney in exchange for safe passage, money (far less than the organ is worth, of course), or even mere subsistence. One form of organ trafficking is better known as organ harvesting, wherein a person is killed and their organs are subsequently harvested *en masse* for sale on the black market (Gutmann, 2014).

Human Egg and Embryo Trafficking

Related to organ trafficking/harvesting is the reality of human egg and embryo trafficking. Many are surprised to learn that there is a booming market of embryo trafficking. Very little research has been done on the subject, leading it to be one of the most poorly understood aspects of modern-day slavery. This includes the trafficking of surrogate mothers and matters of forced births. Similarly, human breeding programs, as unbelievable as it may seem, do exist and qualify as matters of human trafficking. In fact, many of the most well-known cases of cases of human trafficking contain elements pertaining to human breeding programs, and the issue often overlaps with matters of sex trafficking. These can be thorny issues for many, as they often raise ethical questions about such difficult and politically charged issues such as when life begins, women's rights, abortion, and in vitro fertilization (see Carvalho, 2019 for a perfect example of this).

Domestic Servitude

Another variety of modern-day slavery that can occur in a number of ways: is that of domestic servitude, victimizing those who are employed in residential settings such as maids, au pairs, or housekeepers, but also including those who are being exploited in a difficult family situation or a dangerous marriage. Instances of domestic servitude are often connected to family/domestic violence. To understand domestic servitude, it is useful to think of the “help” that is “paid” with minimal food and housing in exchange for working ten to twenty hours a day. Often, victims of this form of trafficking are not allowed to leave the house unaccompanied and are extremely limited in their contact with family and the outside world. There is considerable overlap between domestic servitude, labor trafficking, and sex trafficking.

Child Marriage and Forced Marriage

These are additional forms of modern-day slavery that are disturbingly common throughout the world – and in the United States. As of this writing, child marriage is legal in 43 out of 50 states, in eight of which there is no minimum age for a child to get married to an adult when all statutory laws are considered. This is abominable, and it is indicative of much larger problems in the United States and the world. The fact that

child marriage remains legal in the United States demonstrates simply how much more work needs to be done on the issue of modern-day slavery. Progress on outlawing child marriage is a very modern development: as recently as 2017, child marriage was legal in all 50 states. Forced marriage is similarly a problem but is much more difficult to detect than child marriage, preventing us from knowing how truly widespread it is.

Child Soldiers

Finally, the presence of child soldiers is another common form of human trafficking. Americans often think of children being forced to fight wars in far off, remote places far from our homes and removed from our lives. Places such as Colombia, Congo, the Central African Republic, or the mountains of Afghanistan come to mind. However, as will be seen in later volumes of this work (as well as in Chapters 10 and 11), the reality of child soldiering is much closer than we might think and occurs in every major city in the United States. Additionally, child soldiers are often subject to horrific sexual abuse, making this topic one that intersects with those of labor and sex trafficking of children.

Trafficking vs. Smuggling vs. Kidnapping

Human trafficking is often confused with other forms of crime, and it is important to clarify the similarities and differences among these different offenses as well as ways in which they may overlap.

The first of these is the act of *smuggling*. Smuggling and trafficking often go hand in hand, and one can directly lead to the other. As such, it's not surprising that there is a great deal of confusion about these terms. Much of the confusion stems from political doublespeak from bureaucrats and activists the world over that conflates the two occurrences, as well as that of migration in general (Kenway, 2021). Remember, human trafficking is the combination of an action with a means (force, fraud, or coercion) and a purpose (exploitation). Human smuggling is defined in statute at 8 U.S.C. § 1324, which for the purposes of brevity won't be replicated here. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) helpfully provides a succinct definition:

The provision of a service – typically, transportation or fraudulent documents – to an individual who voluntarily seeks to gain illegal entry into a foreign country.

Human trafficking does not necessarily involve the movement of individuals. For instance, one can be labor trafficked out of the same factory without ever leaving town – sometimes without even leaving the building. Human smuggling, on the other hand, typically does involve movement – specifically, movement across a nation's borders, although it must be clarified that per 8 U.S.C. § 1324, one can be guilty of alien smuggling merely by “harboring” unlawful aliens. Human smuggling is also not *necessarily* human trafficking. In many cases smugglers and the smuggled enter into an agreement and peacefully part ways after they have been successfully smuggled to their destination. A simple way to distinguish the two phenomena comes down to intent and consent: while some may want and may consent to be smuggled, no one wants or consents to be trafficked. However, the nature of smuggling and the risks taken by those being smuggled predispose them to being trafficked by their smugglers. In one instance, a young woman was smuggled through Mexico across the border into the United States. She had paid her smugglers thousands of dollars for safe passage to the country and to

be set up with a job as a maid. Instead, her smugglers became her traffickers upon arrival, trafficking her through a prostitution ring in the American southeast (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014). Her traffickers were of the same national origin as she was, which is not an uncommon occurrence.

This kind of occurrence is not limited to the United States. Hepburn & Simon (2013) detail how interlocked trafficking and smuggling are through the exploitation of Burmese workers in Thailand. Lured by false promises of jobs in markets and factories, traffickers obtain the consent of heavily persecuted Burmese minorities to be smuggled from their homes in Myanmar to Thailand. Once initial consent is obtained and the migrant can no longer turn back, the true brutality of the traffickers is revealed. Trafficked workers are frequently beaten while trafficked women are brutally raped. They are then sold from one trafficker to the next until they finally arrive at their destination: massive fishing fleets which can stay at sea for years, serving as floating prisons for the enslaved. Workers are force fed amphetamines and made to work for multiple days without rest, being killed and thrown overboard if they complain or disobey orders (Hepburn & Simon, 2013; p. 78; Andersen, 2021). This is the wretched reality behind the can of tuna you had for lunch or that special dinner you treated your family to at Red Lobster.

Another crime that is commonly confused with human trafficking is that of kidnapping. Kidnapping fears have a long and sordid history in the United States in which they're often intertwined with concerns over human trafficking, dating back to the Mann Act of 1910. This took on a new life in the child safety panic of the early 1980s, in which "stranger danger" became the go-to thing to warn young children about. Kidnapping is regulated at the federal level by 18 U.S.C. § 1201 and is comparable to forcible abduction of a person against their will, such as at gunpoint or knifepoint. Again, to see the relevant differences recall that human trafficking consists of the *combination* of an (A)ction, a (M)ean, and a (P)urpose.

The reality is that, aside from the human trafficking that occurs near Indigenous reservations (Murdoch, 2021), people really aren't often kidnapped and sold into slavery. It just doesn't work that way³, no matter what the reader may have seen in films such as *Taken* or *The Sound of Freedom*. Kidnapping is violent, sudden, and rare. In fact, kidnapping is quite easy to detect because it is so dramatic, but human trafficking is much more subtle, and often happens even without the victims realizing that it's occurring (Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021). Human trafficking is more about the *relationship* between the trafficker and the victim, especially the power imbalance between the two, than it is about anything else (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook-Heffron, 2018). While people fear being kidnapped and held for hostage, the reality is that traffickers simply don't have to kidnap their victims, which makes it such a more onerous offense. It's far less obvious and out of sight of the ordinary person. This, regrettably, has led to numerous myths and misconceptions about human trafficking, some of which are quite ridiculous, yet nonetheless persevere. Before we can examine the patterns that trafficking etches across the globe, we must put to rest some notions as to what human trafficking is *not*.

³ Again, while many will find this codification of sex trafficking and prostitution into law not only erroneous but outright dangerous to the anti-trafficking cause (Hepburn & Simon, 2013), a point with which I am inclined to agree, this does – *in theory* – provide for a less "let's arrest all the

prostitutes” approach for law enforcement compared to what they currently operate with.

² While I’m aware that I’m opening a very unpleasant can of worms here, there’s probably a good legal defense in here somewhere, if not a whole class action lawsuit. Hint hint.

³ However, when examining human trafficking that occurs near Indigenous communities, it absolutely *does* work that way.

Chapter 2

Myths, Money, and the Pitfalls of the Human Mind

“Three great forces rule the world: fear, greed, and stupidity.”

– Albert Einstein

“Euphemism is a human device to conceal the horrors of reality.”

– Paul Johnson

The vast majority of the American people have no realistic idea what modern slavery is. To some degree, they can’t be faulted for this, as misinformation about trafficking is rampant. Indeed, “human trafficking” seems to be a very effective term to deploy whenever politics necessitates that the public be scared or intimidated into compliance or that a particular action be condemned. Moreover, a plethora of moral panics have helped to blur fact from fiction about the nature of modern-day slavery. Unfortunately, the more time experts spend addressing nonsense, the less time they have to dedicate to actual trafficking cases with very real victims and offenders. Many of my colleagues can attest to the fact that those of us who are working to combat trafficking spend more of our time debunking urban legends and internet rumors that have no factual basis than we do actually making progress in this fight. The harsh truth is that chasing phantoms prevents us from pursuing actual cases – and there are a lot of ghosts out there for people to hunt.

For instance, the summer of 2020 brought about a widespread panic because certain expensive storage cabinets on Wayfair’s website had girls’ names attached to them. While the exorbitant prices of the cabinets were the result of a technical glitch, this

incredibly minor association did not stop the conspiratorial-minded from accusing Wayfair of sex trafficking children out of their warehouses, somehow laundering them through cabinet sales and shipping children around the world all neatly prepackaged in boxes.

Now, if the alleged logistics of this operation – including how the children would breathe in such tight, confined spaces without any air holes – confuses you, don't worry; it likewise bewildered many of us at the time. While the accusation was laughable at best, particularly for experts who knew how much human beings were bought and sold for (hint: it wasn't for anywhere near what Wayfair was accused of charging), this did nothing to prevent the gullible public from flooding the hotline of the anti-trafficking organization Polaris. In fact, Polaris spent so much time responding to these nonsensical concerns that they could have otherwise worked 42 full-time investigations of actual human trafficking (Polaris, 2021).

While there is much more to this story (and to the sheer amount of damage that the QAnon conspiracy theory has done to the greater anti-slavery movement), the takeaway is this: such absurd nonsense takes away time and resources that could be better spent identifying and aiding survivors of human trafficking. Real, measurable harm is caused by the rumors, myths, and half-truths that inundate this field, and lives are lost every day because of them. Thus, I feel it quite necessary to put some of these misconceptions to rest once and for all before we get too deep into the subject matter.¹

Common Myths and Misconceptions

Myth 1: Traffickers target victims they don't know.

In reality, the opposite is true: traffickers tend to target individuals whom they readily know and whom they know to be vulnerable in some way. Thus, one of the keys to understanding – and preventing – human trafficking is understanding and addressing the ways people become vulnerable in the first place. This involves understanding that, as previously mentioned, human trafficking is about the *relationship* between the trafficked and the trafficker (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook Heffron, 2018). In direct contradiction to the popular myth, many, if not *most*, trafficking relations are familial. Despite the comforting lies we like to tell ourselves, the threat is always much closer to home than we realize.

Myth 2: Trafficking is a violent crime and/or involves forcible abduction.

This is the *Taken* myth: that one can be peacefully minding one's business at home when suddenly the door is kicked in, a flashbang goes off, and one is kidnapped and sold into slavery halfway across the world by a group of heavily armed mercenaries, with only Liam Neeson left to save you. Unfortunately for those with a crush on Mr. Neeson, the real world doesn't work this way unless one is already in a war zone or the equivalent. Outside of active conflict zones, tribal regions, and Indigenous reservations mentioned in the prior chapter, this simply isn't how trafficking works. The reality is that the risk for the offender in such a case is too high: the police would respond to such a noisy and violent incident immediately and with lethal force.

This myth gives rise to several variants, including harmful legislation that attempts to criminally define trafficking as a "violent crime." While violence is inherent to and gives rise to trafficking in many ways, the reality is that such legislation, despite the best

intentions, often does more harm than good, penalizing victims more than it does traffickers. Yet another harsh truth is that when it comes to anti-trafficking legislation, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Most survivors of modern-day slavery oppose such legislation just because of how it disproportionately punishes victims for merely being victims while allowing their abusers and traffickers to escape scot-free. Nonetheless, this is a persistent myth, especially among law enforcement with whom I argue about this all the time. We simply can't arrest our way out of this problem, as much as one might like to – in fact, trying to do so is a large part of how we got into this mess in the first place (Bourché & Tipton, 2024).

This rather stubborn and irretractable myth gives rise to numerous stories on social media of “traffickers” forcibly kidnapping people, typically white women, from Target, Walmart, or Costco in the middle of the day (Benton & Peterka-Benton, 2021). These stories are often racially motivated, centering on Black or Hispanic “thugs” who proceed to abduct young – often quite predictably blonde – white women. These stories are often passed along with the person posting them having “figured out” what was going on in an otherwise normal social interaction, having heroically “saved” the poor, unable-to-fend-for-herself woman from being horrifically violated and sold into slavery by the ghetto hoodlums hanging out where they shouldn't be. Such stories only serve to further myths and racial stereotypes, including those about people who are already predisposed to being trafficked. So no, you didn't heroically and effortlessly “save someone from a human trafficking ring” in the middle of Whole Foods by stopping some kids from playing “Marco Polo,” Karen (Staff, 2022). This isn't some noble effort to “raise awareness” (Minutaglio, 2023). Instead, it is often just a form of racism.

To realize just how grotesquely obscene such stories are, let's think about what were to occur if such stories were, in fact, based in reality. If the young woman were taken from the store against her will, it would constitute an act of *kidnapping*, not human trafficking. Moreover, she would probably not go quietly: such an affair would be noisy and violent, and someone would be likely to witness such an event going down in such a public place (which is why such kidnappings typically don't happen in public). Such publicity would likely result in a swift call to 911, which in turn would prompt a very large, very quick, and very angry response from law enforcement. This simply poses too much risk to any criminal thinking of kidnapping anyone. Thus, such self-congratulatory “look at me and all I'm doing to fight human trafficking!” virtue signaling might provide for some emotional self-gratification on social media, but it comes at the cost of further spreading harmful misinformation about the nature of modern-day slavery. Unfortunately, such scenarios are remarkably common given the larger narratives that surround human trafficking discourse.

Much as the rise of social media and technology have increased the ease with which traffickers and other predators can connect with potential victims, so too have these developments allowed for the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation about trafficking (Arronte, 2018). For instance, hand signals are not a real thing when it comes to identifying victims of human trafficking, despite what you might have seen on TikTok or in a flurry of supposedly “legitimate” news coverage around November 2021. While a 16-year-old girl was recovered after she used a hand signal to alert a passing car that she was in trouble, the young woman was a victim of *kidnapping* – not human trafficking (Victor & Medina, 2021). More importantly, this was the only known instance of this

happening. It simply doesn't occur in typical trafficking events, and can be chalked up with stories about gang symbols being marked on back windows and zip ties placed on windshield wipers and door handles of parked cars at the grocery store: these stories and things aren't real.

In fact, these behaviors and alleged trends have never once been tied to an actual case of human trafficking, and only rarely to actual cases of *any* crime. Rather, they are created and posted by people and organizations who have an interest in promoting sensationalism or who pursue other attention-seeking behavior, all to garner likes, followers, and attention that they can then monetize. This, of course, comes at the expense of very real victims and survivors of actual crimes that the public is further kept from understanding through this cycle of disinformation.

Myth 3: Trafficking victims are unable to leave their situation.

This belief has led to countless “awareness-raising” and “educational” presentations containing images of victims bound with ropes and chains – some of which have been determined to have been literally lifted straight from BDSM porn sites. I've even found such images in training programs specifically designed for local and state law enforcement, the FBI, the State Department, and the Department of Homeland Security.² One popular law enforcement training program that the author is aware of casually refers to sex trafficking victims as “bitches.” Such thoughtless presentations can be horrifically retraumatizing to survivors of human trafficking who may be present during these seminars, all while additionally grossly misinforming the public as to the nature of modern-day slavery.

In some cases, yes, victims may be physically kept against their will, and we'll examine some of those cases. But the situation is frequently much more complicated. For instance, a person may lack transportation, a safe place to live, the financial ability to move or get a job elsewhere or they may fear for their own safety or the safety of others if they do leave (Searls, 2022). Some may have been so effectively manipulated as to not even realize that they are under someone else's control. This brings us back to a crucial point: control in these cases is much more subtle than a pair of handcuffs or leg irons. Control here is about psychological trickery and deception – emotional manipulation and ruses. Typically, the strongest factors that prevent victims from leaving are not chains and locks, but rather economic constraints and social stigmas.

Myth 4: Trafficking victims always want help to escape their situation.

Again, one must consider the psychological mechanisms and emotions at play to realize why this is such a problematic notion. Consider the typical prostitute: although her pimp (trafficker) beats her horribly when she does not earn him enough money and he forces her to engage in degrading, often violent sexual encounters with other men, she really truly believes that he loves her and is simply looking out for her best interests. She remembers when they first met and how he treated her initially and may recall the promises he made if she “worked” for him. Thus, when she is arrested by law enforcement officers and asked to betray him, she becomes aggressive and claims that she is operating independently or she takes responsibility for *his* actions. Combining this with her fear of him and her distrust of law enforcement from her previous life experiences, she would rather go to jail than betray her trafficker, whom she may see as her only lifeline. Those familiar with the intricacies of intimate partner violence (IPV)

will readily recognize the dynamics at play here, and there is a strong connection between IPV and instances of trafficking.

The reality is that every trafficking situation is different, just as every survivor of human trafficking is unique. This becomes all the more obvious when dealing with a child who is a survivor of sexual abuse or domestic minor sex trafficking, as they experience and process trauma much differently than adults do (Clancy, 2011). Isolation, fear, shame, social and religious values, beliefs, cultural norms, misplaced loyalty, and the effects of gaslighting and other forms of psychological manipulation all keep individuals from realizing the nature of their situation, seeking help, or identifying as a victim even if they are actively being trafficked (Searls, 2022). Lack of widespread awareness regarding what human trafficking actually *is* further contributes to this phenomenon; I have witnessed many survivors denying that anything at all is out of the ordinary with their situation until a social worker carefully explains what human trafficking *is* to them and that it has a unique criminal definition.³

Ultimately, it must be remembered that self-identification as a victim or survivor of human trafficking happens along a broad continuum of experiences, many of which are informed by previous socially marginalizing experiences. Much to this point, a great many trafficking victims come from communities and backgrounds that are subject to incredibly normalized violence (National Survivor Network, 2022). They may disagree with the way human trafficking narratives are framed and presented or with the practices of many anti-trafficking advocates, frequently having experienced harassment or discrimination at the very hands of anti-trafficking advocates or organizations that claim to be “helping” survivors like them. Likewise, these survivors may disagree with trafficking as being the primary offense that has occurred against them, with the survivor viewing it as more of a matter of racism, sexism, transphobia, etc.

One of the greatest points I can stress is that these viewpoints are real, based on lived experience, and should be welcomed and incorporated into our understanding of trafficking phenomena. All too often, a survivor’s experiences and insights into the dynamics of human trafficking are ignored for a plethora of reasons; chief among them is that what they’re saying simply doesn’t fit the established narrative advanced by the modern anti-slavery movement. This is incredibly nearsighted and needs to change almost more than anything else. Moreover, it hints at some of the deeper issues present in the movement that will become apparent the more we examine this dynamic.

Myth 5: Trafficking is a sex crime, affecting only girls and women.

This common myth ignores all the other forms of trafficking previously discussed, such as labor and organ trafficking, that are far more prevalent than sex trafficking. These other forms of trafficking simply don’t get the same attention as sex trafficking: they don’t serve political narratives nearly as well as sex trafficking, nor are they as “sexy” a topic for salacious media reports (Hepburn & Simon, 2013). This preoccupation with sex trafficking to the exclusion of all other forms of modern slavery highlights the naïve and patriarchally moralistic fixation on women’s sexuality that is so readily visible in the modern abolitionist crusade. Moreover, while girls and women are primarily the targets of sex trafficking, they are hardly the only victims. This myth is horrifically, almost laughably, false. Male victims of sex trafficking are everywhere – but if one is not looking for male victims, one simply won’t find them.

To this point it must be noted that one of the worst sex trafficking cases I ever

worked as that of a young adult male from Africa. He had come to the United States on a marriage visa, having met an American woman with whom he had fallen in love. However, upon arrival, their relationship began to change. She became hostile and increasingly aggressive, and she began making excessive sexual demands of him that he was uncomfortable with. She insisted that he also have sex with her friends, which he initially refused but gave in to as her threats escalated. On multiple occasions when he was “being argumentative,” she grabbed a large knife from the kitchen and told him that either he could have sex with her, or she would “cut his penis off.”

Despite the horrific abuse, the young man endured. He was socially isolated and had no one to turn to in America. He didn’t want her to divorce him and then be deported like she threatened, and he was scared of what she would do with the knife if he didn’t do as she said. One day, while eating a sandwich his trafficker of a wife had prepared for him, the young man noticed something fall out of his meal. Upon closer inspection, he found it to be the remains of a partially crushed pill.

She had been secretly feeding him Viagra.

Eventually, his case was brought to my attention through a local non-profit that I was working with at the time. Through careful work, we were able to get him out of his situation – but not without him losing nearly everything. He spent months in a homeless shelter where I regularly met with him. I distinctly remember how he would always cook his traditional African cuisine to share with me, even though he was homeless and barely able to provide for himself: it was some of the absolute best food I’ve ever had, and I’ve had authentic Mexican street tacos. Ultimately, we were able to successfully obtain a divorce from his trafficker through astute legal wrangling. However, because of the complex power dynamics of the situation, his abusive wife escaped without consequence – free to traffic another unfortunate man for her amusement. There is a critical, albeit unpleasant, lesson behind this story that the reader needs to understand, hence why I’m including it here:

Addressing modern-day slavery is often much more about providing the victim/survivor with the resources they need to help themselves get out of their situation than it is about putting the bad guy in jail. Now, don’t get me wrong: this fact sucks. It absolutely sucks. But the underlying power structures at play often prevent us from doing much more. While I’ve said it before, I’ll say it again: we can’t arrest our way out of this problem – it’s simply too vast and too embedded within our society to do so (see Bourché & Tipton, 2024). What needs to change are the underlying power structures that allow this behavior to go unpunished. *Then* we can start throwing the bastards in jail. Because as it is, and as we’ll see, most of the people going to jail are the victims, not the perpetrators.

This myth also obscures the alarming and disproportionate rates at which members of the LGBTQ community are subjected to sex trafficking, including boys, men, transgender, intersex, and non-binary individuals (Searls, 2022). As we’ll see, vulnerabilities tend to combine and reinforce one another to make individuals particularly susceptible to trafficking and other abuses. The more ways in which an individual is marginalized by the society they live in, the more predisposed they are to trafficking. This gives us insight into preventing trafficking: we have to address the ways people become marginalized and vulnerable in the first place. To this end, we need to address misconceptions about who traffickers are.

Myth 6: Traffickers are Satanists, celebrities, elites, or protected individuals.

Let's address the concern about Satanism first, since that's a disturbingly common and unwarranted source of attention. Claims of widespread Satanic ritual abuse (SRA) and vast Satanic cabals of ne'er-do-wells date back at least to the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and are largely responsible for the modern QAnon conspiracy movement (Romano, 2021). Part of this whole circus has to do with complex social and cognitive psychology and how we only want to see societal problems in some mysterious "other" and not within ourselves and our own beloved institutions and communities. Surely child sexual abuse is the work of evil Satanists, we tell ourselves, and not the result of predators in our own Churches. This aspect of trafficking will be explored both later and in much more detail in a later volume.

However, this myth also lacks merit based on the behavior of predators. Sexual predators, especially pedophiles, like to blend in and camouflage themselves behind guises of propriety and respectability. It's how they gain access to their victims. After all, who would you trust more with your child: the nice, mild-mannered daycare worker who attends church weekly, or the twenty-something with heavy piercings, a mohawk, who is always dressed in black clothing, who constantly vapes and loudly listens to Slipknot while on the job at the local convenience store? Simply put, predators want to *blend in* and *avoid* attention, whereas actual Satanists want to *stand out* and actively *seek* what might traditionally be considered "negative" attention. This can be understood by examining the origins of modern Satanism as a protest against Christian compliance in the Holocaust (see Harrington, 1986; Lebovic, 2016). Much more to the point, due to the Satanic Panic of the 1980s, stories of widespread Satanic ritual abuse and Satanic cult activity have been extensively investigated by psychologists, law enforcement, and scholars alike, and they all have reached the same conclusion: *it's simply not a thing* (Victor, 1993).

This dynamic is worth exploring in more detail as it really gets at the nature of predatory behavior and how societal prejudice and misconceptions give cover to such dangerous individuals. Let's consider the case of Satanic Temple: these folks seem to be everywhere, putting up statues of Baphomet wherever a sculpture of the Ten Commandments is or insisting that abortion is part of a sacred (and admittedly made-up) religious ritual the moment it becomes outlawed. Setting aside for a minute all the obvious political implications, one can see the entire "Temple" for what it is: one large trolling operation. The entire point of these actions is to incite a feverous emotional reaction in those they target. It's in your face: it's *offensive*, and it *demand*s attention. Members of this alleged religion *want* you to get mad and react to these instances of "Satanism" so that they can laugh about how they tricked you do it all over again. It's about *provocation*, not an actual belief in some dark lord of the abyss.⁴

Further, this attention-seeking behavior is in direct conflict with the notions of respectability and normalcy that predators rely on to blend in with the fabric of society and get away with their crimes. Such offenders don't want this particular kind of attention; if accused, they don't want to be the guy who's associated with all this extreme negativity or whom you might stop to think that, "oh, you know what? It makes sense that he'd hurt somebody." Again, think of the heavy metal enthusiast of a vaper who works at the convenience store versus the nice, churchgoing daycare worker. Which one would you be more shocked to learn was a criminal? Pimps and traffickers, in

contrast to the Satanist, seek *positive* attention. They want to look like societal success stories – someone who’s “made it” and whom you look up to. It’s part of their con so that victims will listen to them and do what they say so that one day maybe the victim, too, can have what the trafficker has.

Moreover, predators of all kinds don’t seek to raise alarms but rather soothe any concerns one might have as to their intentions. Look at the issue from this perspective: if you’re going to break into a bank, then you had better be sure the alarm won’t sound. Before you do anything that could possibly sound that alarm, you’re going to be *really* sure that alarm is deactivated and the cops don’t come running. Traffickers, abusers, and sexual offenders work in much the same way. Predators, as it is commonly stated, groom the parents before they groom the children. Think of the wolf in sheep’s clothing: these individuals want you to believe that they’d never harm a fly – that they’re beyond reproach, and that whatever accusation does eventually surface is just some horrible misunderstanding. Or, worse, that the accuser (the victim) is actually trying to smear an innocent person’s reputation (that of the actual perpetrator), harming the community because it’s really the *victim* who’s the wolf, and not the other way around.

As for the notion that human traffickers are “elites” and celebrities, there are particular instances where this has been the case – but these are really few and far between. The instance of Jeffrey Epstein is perhaps the most notable of all of these, and the publicity given to this single case has distracted from hundreds of thousands of other equally if not more grievous cases all around the world. The investigation into Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell was an otherwise typical case aside from the national and global security implications, and even that is not uncommon to encounter in a human trafficking investigation.

Much more often than anyone would care to admit, traffickers and abusers are common, everyday people who blend into our society and who wouldn’t warrant a second look. Some might not even realize that their behavior qualifies as abusive or as human trafficking – even some who may be reading these very words right now. This makes the problem all the more insidious and difficult to combat. Take the typical reverse prostitution sting, typically called a “John” sting where police pose as prostitutes and arrest the buyers who attempt to purchase sex. If there’s one hard and fast rule about John stings, it’s that they almost always net at least one member of the clergy, and more often than not, *at least one cop*. In all of my years, I’ve seldom seen a sting fail to meet these criteria.⁵

Human trafficking doesn’t occur in hidden, secret basements in the middle of DC pizza parlors or in isolated, top secret military compounds hidden away from the public eye. Modern slavery occurs in everyday homes, churches, schools, courthouses, and businesses, right out in the open. The people who run these trafficking rings are the people we sit next to on the bus, sing with in church, and share our meals with at dinner. At any given time, we’re surrounded by literally thousands of Jeffrey Epsteins and Ghislaine Maxwells, all of whom we do business with on a daily basis with and who really have no more social standing or power than we do. So-called “elites” are more responsible for upholding the societal and cultural norms that perpetuate and continue modern-day slavery as the status quo, but they no more often *directly* traffic individuals themselves than do the rest of us.

Myth 7: Trafficking victims are responsible for their own situation.

This myth often takes the form of statements such as “If they initially consented to something that led to a bad situation, they can’t be trafficked since they should have known better.” The implicit victim-blaming that is going on with this claim should be obvious. However, there is more to this issue: the most common tactic of a trafficker is the application of a “bait and switch” scam to get a victim into a scenario that they cannot escape from (Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021; Belles, 2015). Such scams, especially romance and fake job scams, go hand-in-hand with human trafficking, and this relationship will be explored in depth later. The reality is that most traffickers would make deft used car salesmen or politicians in a different life.

Myth 8: Labor trafficking occurs only in developing countries.

Unfortunately, labor trafficking is incredibly common in the developed world, including the United States – we just do an absolutely abysmal job at spotting it. In fact, a significant portion of this book is dedicating to exploring just how widespread this problem is in America.

Myth 9: Sex trafficking is common at major sporting events.

This myth is so prevalent that large law enforcement organizations appear to believe it, and Nita Belles, an otherwise knowledgeable writer and passionate advocate on the subject, dedicated an entire chapter to this very issue in her 2015 book, *In Our Backyard*. Moreover, I know many officers and law enforcement professionals who, every year, take time off to work “human trafficking cases” at the Super Bowl who are incredible people. *I’ve* even overseen operations to identify victims and perpetrators at the Super Bowl, including one that’s ongoing as I write these words.⁶ This myth is simply that omnipresent. Unfortunately, the truth behind the fiction reflects just how poorly we respond to the actual problem of sex trafficking in our own backyards, furthering cycles of trafficking and exploitation.

Sex trafficking doesn’t really increase at the Super Bowl and at other sporting events as much as the attention paid to it does. The trafficking is *always* there, whether one is paying attention or not, but once a year law enforcement and politicians pretend to pay attention to the problem, all to great fanfare in the media (Bordow, 2023). Specifically, as Dr. Samantha Calvin at Arizona State University put it,

It’s not the Super Bowl that creates a spike in trafficking or that trafficking is directly linked to these events. Men who are women buyers and come to a new city for an event or a conference, the chances of them buying sex in that city are pretty high. So, it’s not the Super Bowl or the Barrett-Jackson Auction or the Phoenix Open that creates trafficking. It’s the people who already are buying sex and they come here and they buy sex here.⁷

In fact, there is no empirical evidence that sex trafficking is linked to the Super Bowl, and the issue has been exhaustively studied.⁸ Yet, a whopping 76% of all print media published between 2010 and 2016 promoted this demonstrably false narrative (Martin & Hill, 2019). Such stories clearly carry big weight and earn top dollars for the media who report it. Which leads us directly to the second major issue of this chapter.

Hidden Motives: Profit, Prestige, Publicity

False narratives such as those described above often continue to exist because they’re

effective marketing stunt for those who profit from sensationalizing human trafficking. This is a central issue, and one that explains why we continue to chase phantoms in the dark without so much as a flashlight: there's really good money in us *not* finding a solution to this whole modern slavery thing. To make the reality all the sadder, the greed and corruption is often at its absolute worst among those specifically tasked with addressing the problem.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement itself often reinforces false narratives about trafficking. The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board noted this in the buildup to the 2022 Super Bowl. Law enforcement is big business, and stories of trafficked and exploited victims being heroically saved by law enforcement is good for that business. Moreover,

It gives police an opportunity to seek more resources and to remind us that we need their services. And because police are authority figures, and because fear of crime is good for the news business as well, false or imagined threats uttered by law enforcement leaders and repeated uncritically by news outlets or even in TV dramas like “CSI” become part of a body of “copaganda” — statements that serve police interests and become commonly accepted despite their being demonstrably untrue.⁹

But it gets even worse: shortly after the Los Angeles Time's Editorial Board posted this scathing truth-to-power statement, the L.A. County Sheriff announced that 74 adult and children were “rescued” from trafficking, 34 suspected traffickers were arrested, and about 200 sex buyers were additionally arrested. Of course, one must be highly suspicious of these numbers, given how such operations are statistically more likely to arrest actual victims of human trafficking as well as non-trafficked sex workers than actual traffickers and “Johns” (Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021; Associated Press, 2022; Scaramucci, 2023).¹⁰ As much as law enforcement are hyped up as being the quintessential element to fighting human trafficking, one must understand that as it stands now, law enforcement is as much a part of the problem as they are the solution.

Let me be clear: this is not meant as a disparagement of law enforcement, as I know it will inevitably be twisted to be given the monied interests and politics at play. Rather, it is simply a summary of the situation as it currently stands. Again, *what we're doing simply isn't working*. Moreover, and in complete fairness to frontline law enforcement officers, street cops cannot be blamed as much as their superiors for this particular problem. This is due to the simple reason that one fights as one is trained – and police, across the board, are unequivocally *not* trained to address the subtleties of human trafficking.

Only about 40% of medium-to-large police departments in the United States receive training on identifying victims of human trafficking (Arronte, 2018). Overall, only about 18% of all law enforcement officers nationwide receive *any* type of training on human trafficking, with over two thirds of American officers reporting that they get their operational information about human trafficking from TV and movies such as *Taken* (Nash, 2022). Keep in mind that the training these few officers *do* receive isn't necessarily good training – it may consist of watching a fifteen-minute YouTube video or sitting through a PowerPoint presentation provided by someone with absolutely no credentials or experience on the topic, simply as a pointless box-ticking exercise. This results in approximately only 10% of state and local law enforcement agencies having

implemented protocols pertaining to human trafficking since the passing of the TVPA in 2000 (Remington, 2016).

Instead, American law enforcement officers are taught to confront the issue from an anti-prostitution/anti-vice angle rather than an anti-trafficking approach. This produces a framing effect for officers resulting in how they perceive the problem that they are subsequently tasked to deal with, a framing that once has taken hold, is very hard to shake loose.¹¹ An officer can go many years without ever hearing of the TVPA, and when they do, it's often as if a light bulb goes off in their heads as to what is really going on (Collins, 2011). While this is a vast oversimplification of the complex and myriad problems facing law enforcement on this issue, it is nonetheless a critical one that must be addressed.

The Savior Complex

A related harmful misconception is that victims of trafficking are somehow “saved” from their situation by heroic “liberators,” very often law enforcement or the military, who in a very hypermasculine way kick in a door and save the victims from equally hypermasculine predators (in slow motion, no less!) all while an angel plays a harp overhead (Benton, & Peterka-Benton, 2021). The myth of sex trafficking at the Super Bowl takes it a step further much like the Q mythos does, allowing the spectator to engage in the fantasy of being a “deliverer from evil” with a moral prerogative to help “save” trafficking victims who are somehow now devoid of agency and free will. This is all accomplished by telling these would-be heroes, “If you see something, say something.” While these notions often help satisfy the self-serving, typically white-savior complexes of those who aspire to get involved in such work, they rarely help actual victims of human trafficking.

Conspiracy Theories

Significant contributors to the Jörmungandr of human trafficking are found within the dark world of conspiracy theories. Deeply interwoven with the myths presented earlier, conspiracy theories are also born of hidden motives, reflecting a particularly venomous aspect of trafficking disinformation that deserves special attention here.

Adrenochrome Harvesting

A widespread claim propagated by QAnon followers is that children are sex trafficked so that they can be put into a state of fear, thereby increasing their adrenaline production, which in turn allows this adrenaline to be harvested.

This preposterous claim has, remarkably, even infiltrated the most serious elements of the anti-slavery movement in recent years. Most notably, the claim is connected to Operation Underground Railroad, in large part due to Jim Caviezel, best known for his portrayal of Jesus Christ in *The Passion of the Christ*, who promoted the claim at a conspiracy conference and who later portrayed Tim Ballard himself in *The Sound of Freedom* (Merlan, 2021). Despite his rather peculiar beliefs, Mr. Caviezel genuinely seems to be acting with the best of intentions – he appears to be truly concerned about children's welfare; he's just tragically misinformed on the topic. This, of course, is the larger point that I'm driving at: many other anti-trafficking activists are similarly misinformed, whether they are prone to believing in conspiracies or not.

There are many problems with this particular narrative. First, the horrible truth is that *children are sex trafficked for sex*, end of story. A lot of people have trouble wrapping

their heads around this terrifying reality, but it is what it is, and we must face facts. There are enough vicious monsters out there already without us needing to invent more, no matter how much it may comfort one's psyche to explain the horrors of the world by creating phantom menaces. By making up these fantasies, people are actually helping the real monsters get away. Additionally, while adrenaline (epinephrine) was at one time collected by killing and harvesting it from the adrenal glands of animals (read: *not* children), that practice has not been used since the late 1800s. Nowadays, it's produced synthetically in large factories (Sneader, 2001). Further, there would be no need to harvest it from children, as one can go down the road and purchase it from the nearest pharmacy: it's literally what comes in an EpiPen. When examining such fantastical claims, it always helps to remember the *financial* motive behind human trafficking (Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021).

This claim further centers on a very specific component of adrenaline known as adrenochrome. Now, adrenochrome is present in the human body, the conspiracists get that much right – but in *very* miniscule amounts, because it's potentially toxic in even small amounts. The conspiracy argues that Satanic pedophiles – which we already discussed in depth – abduct children and sex traffic them not because they are pedophiles, but because they want the children to produce more adrenochrome, which they somehow magically harvest from them without killing the child (a medical impossibility – a living being can't survive without their adrenal glands unless undergoing hormone replacement therapy). This is allegedly because members of the supposed Satanic Cabal™ seek the adrenochrome to rub onto their skin for its rejuvenating, age-defying effects.

In fact, this myth appears to be directly traced to a 2017 movie, *Adrenochrome*, starring Tom Sizemore, which centers around a satanic, cannibalistic sex cult hunting for people to kill – all in turn to get a flood of adrenochrome by cutting out their adrenal glands and eating them. The movie is rife with references to pedophiles drinking children's blood, lizard people, the new world order, “periods of annihilation,” intergalactic reptile empires who control American “warlords,” and “master plans.” Perhaps most importantly, the movie's dialogue contains what may be the first instance of the bizarre claim that inducing fear makes one's adrenal glands “juicier” for harvesting.

Sound familiar?

Now, let me repeat that so that there's no question left in the reader's mind: the entire QAnon phenomenon appears to have literally started from what one Amazon reviewer called “a wild, low-budget mess” – an admitted piece of fiction that *no one* was meant to take seriously. It truly seems that someone took the plot of a low-budget horror film and then merged it with aspects of the PizzaGate conspiracy theory and good old-fashioned antisemitism, ultimately framing its release as a “leak” in late October 2017 (the movie itself, it should be noted, was released in April 2017 – six months before “Q” first appeared on 4Chan). This led to countless gullible Americans – including members of Congress – as well as a significant portion of the anti-trafficking movement to swallow it hook, line, and sinker without any critical thought or question.¹² One is reminded of what Winston Churchill once said about democracy: that the best argument against it is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.

However, many of these stories and fictions can be traced back to earlier rantings of

Andrew Anglin on his Neo-Nazi site, *The Daily Stormer* (O'Brien, 2017). Familiar QAnon fables such as pedophilic obsessions with blood rituals and underground tunnels used to move kidnapped children and aborted fetuses can be found in the internet archives of Anglin's conspiracy-laden posts on the *Stormer* from the early 2000s, thus explaining not only the innate antisemitism of many later QAnon postings, but the blatant and vile racism of them as well (Stanton, 2020; Bloom, 2021). With that noted, and setting aside the scientific impracticalities of this nonsense for a minute, this extensive method to milk children of adrenochrome in this detailed and elaborate conspiracy all seems like a very complicated process just for some magical Lucifer lotion. This raises one obvious question:

Wouldn't it be easier to just buy this adrenochrome stuff online if you wanted it so badly? I mean, you can. Quite easily, in fact. Just like epinephrine, adrenochrome is manufactured synthetically and can be bought in absurdly large quantities online. All one has to do is pull up Google, find a chemical supply company, and order all the adrenochrome that one's little heart desires. I even managed to find some for sale on Amazon. One should be cautious, however, before ordering a bunch of this skin-restoring miracle cure. While adrenochrome does certainly absorb through the skin, it may not restore one's youth as much as speed up one's funeral: adrenochrome can be quite toxic.

Perhaps more to the point is the fact that, if this were an actual *thing* that happens in human trafficking, I would have seen it by now. After nearly 20 years in this field, I have led countless investigations into modern slavery operations across the globe. Never once did I see any evidence of perpetrators of this horrible crime harvesting the adrenal glands of victims, even in instances of organ trafficking and harvesting operations where I had human remains left to examine. This is because these glands are worthless to traffickers, in turn because the demand for adrenal transplants simply doesn't exist: if someone has a malfunctioning adrenal gland, the treatment for that disorder is hormone replacement therapy as mentioned previously, not a transplant. Transplants are both risky and expensive; hormone replacement therapy is not. All of this can be readily confirmed by minimal fact-checking, and that isn't even necessary if one uses some simple common sense.

Yet, this is one of the most frequently cited falsehoods that we get asked about in this field. It's almost as if people don't want us to address *real* instances of human trafficking and modern-day slavery, but would rather have us keep chasing ghosts.

LGBTQ Grooming of Children

Over the past year or two, as people have slowly (very slowly) realized how ridiculous the last claim is, a new one has begun to take its place: that LGBTQ persons groom children through inclusive schools and drag shows in order to sex traffic them.

There's a long and a short response to this. The short answer is *No -- not even close*. The long answer is, unfortunately, much more complicated, and involves a great deal of what this work is dedicated to: the power dynamics and social structures underlying modern slavery and the ways in which they obscure the issue and prevent us from addressing the problem. While populations and statistics will be examined in great detail later, the fact is that LGBTQ individuals are far more likely to *be trafficked* than they are *to traffic*; they are far more likely to *be abused* than they are *to abuse*. Moreover, grooming is a lengthy *process*, typically lasting between six months and a year if not longer (Headley, 2019), and it doesn't happen within the hour or two that Drag Queen

Story Hour lasts. This particular claim, however, is a prime example of how the discourse around modern slavery, child safety, and much more is not rooted in fact but rather is twisted by those in positions of power and privilege to keep vulnerable populations in a perpetual state of vulnerability. Further, such populations serve as effective scapegoats when we need to avoid responsibility or introspection as to our own role and responsibility for society's problems. It's a classic case of DARVO: Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender.

This is a pattern the reader should become familiar with, as we will see it time and time again. And it speaks volumes to the fact that yes, a great many people seemingly would prefer that we keep chasing ghosts rather than do anything about the actual problem. The actual problem is much more deeply rooted in our culture than antisemitic urban legends about deranged cultists would have you believe. Much of the conversation, one finds, is seemingly specifically *designed* to keep marginalized groups marginalized, reinforcing their vulnerability to slavery and trafficking. This occurs all while those who so heinously exploit them manage to stroke their own egos, handing each other glitzy awards for heroically “rescuing” the oppressed and downtrodden from the very tyranny that they themselves are contributing to. At the same time, nobody seems to question what actually happens to all the money that gets donated for the explicit purpose of pulling people out of hellholes.

Because, as survivors of human trafficking can attest, it certainly is not going to them (Polaris, 2023).

This merits further clarification about some of the wildest claims about modern-day slavery: specifically, what human trafficking clearly is *not*. Humanity's proclivity towards the irrational and the conspiratorial have led to a multitude of bizarre claims about the nature of human trafficking. Sometimes, these tendencies intersect with other pathologies that, while being the direct result of mental illness or genuine trauma, are nonetheless *not* indicative of human trafficking.

Mind Control

Another popular claim within certain conspiracist circles is that human trafficking is a matter of mass mind control, hypnosis, thought implantation, or advanced brain implants. Typically with these claims, people cite old government experiments such as MK-ULTRA and the development of LSD, claiming that these are somehow behind the phenomena of modern-day slavery.¹³ While substance abuse and addiction are commonly manipulated with trafficking victims and the nature of control in modern slavery is much more psychological than physical, these claims demonstrate a misunderstanding of basic human psychology. Claims of hypnosis being responsible for crimes date back to the Satanic Panic (Victor, 1993), with such claims arising from false memories generated by hypnotic therapy (Loftus & Ketcham, 1996).

Nonetheless, this has not stopped many from proposing everything from extraterrestrials as being the reason modern-day slavery is so widespread to trying to pass off pictures of “implants” in human skulls that turn out to be nothing more than inflamed blood vessels. A person who is not familiar with such anti-trafficking discussions likely wouldn't believe how common such nonsense is among otherwise rational, highly educated, and well-informed people. Perhaps more importantly, one wouldn't realize just how often these discussions end up influencing real world policy. The boring truth of the matter is that the CIA and NSA are not made up of deranged

maniacs hellbent on cutting human skulls open in some mad scientist experiments just to implant highly experimental technology in an attempt to drive the average American further insane. For one, these agencies have much more subtle and far more effective means of achieving such ends than by performing major invasive surgery on you, and two, you're thinking of Elon Musk, not the CIA.

For example, there has never been a case in which microwave or other directed energy weapons have been used to facilitate human trafficking, despite conspiracists' claims. Firstly, these devices are simply too prohibitively expensive to be deployed in a manner that would explain the widespread nature of modern-day slavery.



Figure 2.1. (Cochran, n.d.). *A microwave weapon.*

Specifically, this is the Tactical High Power Operational Responder (THOR). The dish fires concentrated electromagnetic energy to disrupt the onboard electronics of aerial drones, shooting them from the sky. Note the size of the device compared to the soldiers operating it

Secondly, *the technology doesn't work that way.* Directed energy weapons don't subtly

place thoughts in one's head or act as a form of mind control. They cause real physical damage or noticeable pain. If you were being targeted by a microwave weapon, *you would know it*, and you'd be doing everything possible to get out of its path. This is not a technology that would be following you around, targeting you at every second of your life. These devices are also bulky and not easily disguisable. You would certainly notice a microwave dish being set up on your neighbor's lawn and pointed at your house if this were a real thing that was actually happening.¹⁴

Gang Stalking

Another claim that I frequently hear in regard to human trafficking is that of “gang stalking” of “targeted individuals.” This is alleged to occur in ways similar to conventional stalking, but is associated with particularly bizarre additions. Targeted individuals will claim that they hear voices associated with thoughts being “beamed” into their heads, they will suffer severe health problems as a result of the stalking, and they claim to be subjected to terrifying attacks such as attempts at poisoning, suffocation, or being “drowned in bugs.” The purpose of this stalking is apparently to disrupt every aspect of the target's life – nothing ever goes quite right for the victim, as the gang stalkers always have a way of screwing things up just when life seems to finally be going well again. Frequently, the perpetrators are alleged to be members of large, well-known organized crime networks, or federal law enforcement or intelligence agencies, such as the FBI, NSA, and CIA. In addition, these cases often touch upon other mythical claims: microwave/directed energy weapons are deployed, mind control and brain implants are involved, computers, cameras, and cell phones are hacked, etc.

Of course, these phenomena have never been proven to exist, and not a single documented case has been found.¹⁵ Nonetheless, this is an incredibly popular myth, prevalent even among victim advocates and first responders. Indeed, I cannot count the number of times some absolute numbskull at a DV/SA crisis center has suggested this as a possible explanation as for a survivor's experiences. Apparently, suggesting to a domestic violence survivor that she is not, in fact, being stalked and harassed by her abusive ex but rather by the entire Sicilian Mafia itself is, for some, a form of trauma-informed care.¹⁶ More to the point, in a 2015 study, 128 self-declared victims of gang-stalking were compared to a randomly selected group of 128 self-declared victims of traditional, individual stalking. Of the individual stalking cases, only 5 were found to be delusional (5/128); however, of the gang-stalking cases, *all of the individuals were found to be delusional* (128/128) (Sheridan & James, 2015). The claimants of gang-stalking additionally displayed stronger impairment and psychological disturbances than did the traditional, actual stalking victims. The authors noted that this should be strongly considered when it comes to analyzing risk in stalking cases, allocating police resources, and referring to psychiatric services. The latter point is particularly important: a 2018 study demonstrated that targeted individuals sometimes respond to their delusions of persecution with extreme violence, including mass homicide (Sarteschi, 2018). Clearly, there is no link to actual stalking or human trafficking in these cases, but rather a complex psychological phenomenon that requires early intervention to prevent escalation.

Spiritual Warfare

The last fantastical claim to address is that human trafficking is somehow the result

of psychic/spiritual warfare, energy ‘vampires,’ or witchcraft. As easy as it would be for me to claim that this is more nonsense related to the Satanic Panic of the 1980s, there are remarkably good reasons for people to believe this. And the answer really touches upon how a great many of the most successful trafficking rings operate across the world.

Religion intersects with human trafficking in some intricate and complicated ways. This is not a condemnation of religion, nor is it an exculpatory statement of it. All I am saying is that religion’s role in human trafficking and related abuse phenomena is *complicated*. For every survivor who finds healing through faith, there is another survivor who can recall exactly which Scripture was quoted and used to justify their rape, torture, or enslavement. And often, stories of human traffickers being “Satanists” serve a social function of keeping us from becoming too aware of the predators that lie close to us in our own communities of faith – it’s a cognitive defense mechanism, because no one wants to think about that reality.

Moreover, religion and its tenets have long been used as justification for slavery. To quote Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States of America,

[Slavery] was established by decree of Almighty God... it is sanctioned in the Bible, in both testaments, from Genesis to Revelation. ¹⁷

The same theme was echoed by countless others before and after the Civil War, long into the desegregation era and even in more recent years. Religion has worked to uphold institutions of slavery as much as it has demolished them; for every John Brown there is a Warren Jeffs. The reality is that religious rituals and tenets of faith are quite frequently used to intimidate and control victims through their most personal beliefs. Consider the following: if one is being sexually abused by the Prophet of the Lord, is it *really* sexual abuse, or is it him showing his favor to his chosen few as the prophet says? Likewise, if one believes that one’s traffickers possess powerful magical powers, can read minds, and can curse one’s family members the moment one betrays them, is that person really going to tell the police everything that they’ve suffered?

Of course not – they’re going to keep quiet and keep doing whatever they’re told to do, no matter how much it hurts them.

And so, we see how victims’ own beliefs are turned against them by highly manipulative traffickers to keep them imprisoned and doing exactly as the trafficker wants them to do. Thus, the significance of psychology cannot be overstated when it comes to human trafficking. And while religious rituals and spiritual beliefs are used to exert emotional and psychological control over victims via the victim’s pre-existing beliefs (Nagle & Owasanoye, 2016), one must remember that these rituals have no actual power over others on their own. This is a matter of psychology, not one of theology or metaphysics. Cases involving religious coercion and control always involve a trick or a con of some sort, which may purely psychological or may also involve such simple physical aids as a well-placed listening device.

However, behind every myth, conspiracy theory, and urban legend lies a grain of truth. Now that small grain is hardly what everyone expects it to be once it has been identified: in fact, it is often distorted through the game of telephone that is human cognition and communication. Yet, the core truth remains, even if it has been flipped upside down and inverted in the most perverse ways to obscure it from view. Throughout these pages, we will carefully cut our way through the sensationalism of these claims to unearth the small pieces of harsh reality at their centers. In the search for

the origins of these myths, it is important to remember one fundamental truth: context is key.

Terminology, Euphemisms, and Word Games

Framing the discussion of human trafficking is of great importance, as we have already seen. Even the terms we use to discuss the problem reveal how we perceive it, as we witnessed in the discussion of how police approach trafficking from a prostitution/vice perspective: *one fights as one is trained*. If one is looking for prostitutes to arrest and fine, one will find prostitutes to arrest and fine. If one is looking for victims or survivors stuck in cycles of human trafficking, however, then another approach is clearly warranted. Extensive literature exists on terminology and preferred language for discussing modern-day slavery and the citations here are numerous because there are many different opinions on the topic. Professionals in different fields of study use different terminology to refer to the same people or phenomena.

As someone who makes a habit of floating between various professional settings, it becomes so difficult to keep track of which terms I can use with which groups that it becomes a case of code-switching. One moment, I may be speaking with a group of law enforcement officers, and five minutes later needing to relay what was discussed to social workers – two groups who speak *very differently*. For example, law enforcement tends to refer to offenders and victims, whereas social workers speak about survivors. Factor in the various lingos of the survivor, activist, and intelligence communities, and it quickly becomes confusing if one isn't well-versed in the language of the particular group they're working with.

There's a reason that I mention this: if people are using different terminology to discuss the same thing, misunderstandings are going to occur, possibly even causing some to take offense. But more importantly, common terminology would help us to better understand precisely what it is we're all up against, and just how big the problem is. Much of my research for this book has led me to realize just how language is used to minimize and trivialize the greatest atrocities (Lakoff, 1973). I see this playing out every day in my work in the way that colleagues are forced to talk about trafficking activities just to avoid burning bridges. In many ways, we are prevented from being honest with both the public and those in power about what we know simply because society deems it impolite to discuss it. Thus, I feel it's important to examine what the literature has to say about the language used to discuss human trafficking.

A wonderful discussion on this topic can be found in Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, and Cook-Heffron's 2018 work (p. 23) over whether the term "victim" or "survivor" is more appropriate when discussing those who have experienced trafficking. Citing a 2016 study on the issue, the authors note that simply referring to individuals as "victims," especially those who have endured domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), is an inaccurate term as it vastly oversimplifies their lived experience and all that they have endured. Additionally, the word "serves as an implicit character assessment" of the individual instead of representing their experience (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook-Heffron, 2018). The trio of authors note that to understand such victims, the sociocultural nature of the power dynamics of their trafficking relationship must first be understood. Lack of legal immigration status, employment opportunities, cultural and community discrimination, income dependency, homelessness, poverty, and war and

displacement are all sociocultural aspects of this power dynamic.

These factors are, as the authors argue, critical to understanding how individuals fall victim to human trafficking, and survivors' experiences need to be considered in this light. The trio also recognize that "professional context" may influence one's word choice. For instance, "law enforcement may use *complainant* and *suspect*, attorneys use *client* and *plaintiff*, and social workers may use *client* or *survivor* or *victim*." (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook-Heffron, 2018, p.23).

Yet, all of this discussion misses a vitally important perspective: that of the victims/survivors themselves. Research has shown that victims prefer – and dislike – the term "survivor" just as much as they do the term "victim" (Harding, 2020; Papendick & Bohner, 2017; RTI International). In fact, it's a complete myth that individuals prefer being called "survivors" as opposed to "victims" (Taylor, 2023). Victims, to paraphrase Dr. Jessica Taylor, should never be defined by what a perp did to them. In fact, in any other form of crime, *we don't do this*. Yet when it comes to sex crimes and human trafficking, both of which are perceived as highly gendered offenses, *of course* we play such word games, regardless of whether the victim actually benefits from them.

Before we go too far down that rabbit hole, let it be clearly stated: both terms are clearly appropriate in discourse, with preference given to the term an individual victim/survivor prefers (RTI International). However, the available data reveals that the preference of "survivor" over "victim," and the advancement of this as the preferred term, must be similarly also stated as being one of advocates' preferences, not that of survivors. Often put forward with lofty notions of "empowering" the victim, these terms have been extensively workshopped in school auditoriums and webinars that are great for collecting continuing education credits but not much else. The terms might sound good in theory yet have little basis in reality – especially when paired with a definite lack of empowering actions and support (Harding, 2020). This raises the specter of innate, self-serving psychological biases and how they impact work done in this space.

Some may object at my use of the term, "self-serving" to describe these biases. However, it's important to understand that nearly every aspect of human behavior has some self-serving aspect to it. It is likewise essential to understand that these biases are innate and unconscious, and that even those who have the best of intentions can cause immense harm. Consider the case of psychologist Dan Ariely, who found himself at the age of eighteen burned over 70% of his body when a magnesium flare round he was carrying exploded in his arms (Ariely, 2009). While recovering in the burn unit in an Israeli hospital, Ariely noticed that the nurses there removed the bandages from their patients rather quickly with a rapid "tug" instead of a longer, slower "pull." The nurses, Ariely realized, had theorized that it was preferable for their patients – that is, less painful – for the bandages to be removed from their burns quickly rather than slowly. The caregivers were like most human beings: they were trying to minimize the suffering of others. After all, they had chosen a profession where they could do that on a daily basis.

Except that for Ariely and the others on the burn ward, the exact opposite was true: the bandage removal process was agonizing. *Excruciating*, even. Slower, longer bandage removals lessened their suffering. Ariely knew the nurses to be generous, empathetic, and caring individuals – moreover, they had vast experience in removing bandages, and so the issue wasn't one of neglect or malice.

What was going on?

When Ariely presented his rather empirical findings to the nursing staff, they admitted that they should change their methods. However, there was one thing Ariely forgot to take into consideration in his calculations, and it was only after a nurse explained her reasoning for the quick bandage removal that Ariely understood the irrational root of the problem: by making short “tugs,” the nurses were unconsciously minimizing their own exposure to the pain and trauma expressed by their patients. Thus, the nurses were, despite their very best intentions, inflicting greater harm upon their patients than necessary, not knowing that they were actually acting to protect themselves from anguish.

There are many lessons to be drawn from this example, not the least of which is that humans are not rational actors as is commonly believed but rather quite the opposite: they are *predictably irrational*. That is, in fact, the title of the book Ariely went on to write (Ariely, 2009). However, the most important lesson for the reader to take away from this is that it is incredibly easy to mean well while doing great and everlasting harm, all because of one’s innate and unconscious biases that screw up our perception of what’s actually going on. This is a common problem in the anti-trafficking movement that will become apparent shortly, and it’s one that is exacerbated by the fact that there are no standards of care or minimum training prerequisites to become a practitioner in this field.

Another common issue of terminology is what to call the problem we are faced with: is it “human trafficking,” or is it “modern-day slavery?” Or is it something else entirely? Which best captures the nature of the associated activities? This is not an issue of political correctness, but rather a significant matter of very explicitly defining the nature of the threat. As a dear colleague recently pointed out to me, the very definition of what we know as “human trafficking” is off: while we have the requirements to make a prosecutable legal case out of an instance of trafficking (the “AMP” model), we still don’t really have a good layperson’s definition of what human trafficking actually is.

And if we are to truly know our enemy, that’s quite a problem.

Arguments suggesting that “human trafficking” is the best term are put forth in two comprehensive articles: one by Sarah Harrison, an Anti-Human Trafficking Specialist, and another by Katie Jenkins of Mosaic Family Services in Dallas, Texas. Both argue that the term is more appropriate than “modern-day slavery” given recent racial justice movements and the history of slavery in the United States. Jenkins cites a 2019 memo issued by the National Survivor Network reading in part, “that slavery and trafficking are two different experiences that may correlate and have similar structural concepts but are not the same.” This development came about from the need to recognize the impact of chattel slavery in America and the generational trauma that it left behind on the descendants of those affected, claiming that equating human trafficking with this form of slavery was a fallacy (National Survivor Network, 2019).

Building off this, Jenkins turns attention to the Transatlantic Slave Trade, describing how millions of Africans were brought to the United States with the intention of enslavement. (Jenkins, 2022). During the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Jenkins argues, people were enslaved because of who they *were* and not just anyone could be subjected to slavery, as opposed to being enslaved because a trafficker exploited a vulnerability, as in modern day trafficking. Additionally, not all victims of modern trafficking are

physically restrained, differing from traditional slavery. However, Jenkins is careful to point out that the majority of victims of human trafficking remain persons of color, just as was the case in traditional slavery – a fact that any demographic analysis of victims bears out, yet one that remains often overlooked (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011; Woods, 2014).

Harrison raises some additional points. To her credit, she points out the lack of consistency in using the term “modern-day slavery” as opposed to “human trafficking” (Harrison, 2018). What constitutes human trafficking is clearly defined in law, it can be argued, whereas “modern-day slavery” is more nebulous. Additionally, part of this inconsistency stems from the vast and disparate ways that trafficking can manifest. Much as each victim of trafficking is different from the last, each trafficking situation is unique: thus, whatever term we use is ultimately imperfect, and gaps will remain regardless of whatever term one settles on, especially given the vast intersection of disciplines the issue sees (Musto, 2009). However, even Musto acknowledges that given the grossly exploitative conditions in which trafficking victims are found, there is a great tendency to equate trafficking with slavery, and that the terms are often used interchangeably. In particular, Musto cites a 2003 article as offering the strongest argument that modern-day slavery and human trafficking are “indistinguishable,” as they both “grossly deny the dignity of victims.”

Not to be outdone, Harrison is quite quick to point out the racist nature of much of the modern-day abolition movement, which ignores the history of slavery in America and the genocidal treatment of Indigenous peoples and black persons and how this relates to modern trends (Harrison, 2018; see also Woods, 2014). She makes an exceptional point about how the United States government doesn’t even track how many indigenous women go missing every year, revealing just how little the government values those lives even today. It is this ignorance of the history of racialized slavery in the modern abolitionist movement that led the National Survivor Network to reach the same conclusion about terminology in 2019.

However, significant overlap exists between Harrison’s and Jenkins’ arguments that indicates their arguments aren’t as strong as one might first believe.

Both criticize the use of the term “modern-day slavery” for shock value. This is, to be honest, also quite fair. The anti-trafficking movement is nothing if not rife with shock terms meant to elicit strong emotional responses in place of carefully reasoned ones. Harrison, in a bullet point titled, “there is nothing modern about this form of exploitation,” raises the issue of the genocide of the indigenous people who called America their home before it was America, and how they were trafficked – especially indigenous women, whose bodies were deigned only good for one thing: the entertainment of white males (Harrison, 2018). Both authors make a detailed and elaborate argument that human trafficking should very clearly *not* be called “modern-day slavery” as slavery was legal in the United States, while human trafficking was not (Harrison, 2018, Jenkins, 2022).

Here is where the first major problem arises with this argument. Despite being a common retort of those who wish to do away with the term “modern slavery,” not all human trafficking is actually illegal in the United States. The TVPA, as previously discussed, only renders sex and labor trafficking illegal. Child marriage, on the contrary, was legal in all 50 states until 2017 and remains legal in 43 states as of this writing.

Thus, one might challenge such proponents of this term to follow their own logic and tell a survivor of child marriage or forced marriage that they *weren't*, in fact, trafficked.¹⁸ Their marriage was *legal*, after all – just like slavery. Moreover, this argument ignores global trends while paying them lip service in favor of an almost unbelievably Americentric definition.¹⁹ Trafficking in far more impoverished and underdeveloped parts of the world more closely resembles traditional chattel slavery than it does in the modern United States; a fact which, quite confusingly, was explicitly mentioned as part of the very reason the National Survivor Network also chose the term “human trafficking” to describe this admittedly global phenomena over “modern slavery” (National Survivor Network, 2019).

Yet even more to the point, Harrison herself pre-empts this essential crux of her argument by arguing – and outright acknowledging – that slavery was never fully illegalized in the United States. Pointing out the role of the 13th Amendment, Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and the forced labor of those incarcerated through the criminal justice system, she makes her point very well: no, slavery didn't go away.

Slavery didn't go anywhere.

Some insight into the scope of this problem of actual, modern-day slavery then becomes clear: there are more Black *males* under criminal supervision (jail, parole, prison, or probation) than the *total number of slaves*, both male *and* female, in the United States in 1850 (Childs, 2022). At the same time, one can see a similar pattern emerge when one examines Jenkins' careful disclaimer: human trafficking, as it is currently measured, disproportionately affects people of color (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011). This brings up an important question: why aren't these individuals counted in human trafficking statistics (which already show trafficking to disproportionately affect persons of color), and why are they largely ignored by anti-trafficking organizations or advocates?

Forced labor is a recognized form of *labor trafficking* and Harrison seems to be concerned about the forced labor of prison inmates – which is perfectly reasonable. After all, why wouldn't an anti-human trafficking specialist be concerned about forced labor?

Yet, there seems to be a significant disconnect here, and it is one that occurs frequently in this field. One may be following an argument such as Harrison's or Jenkins' only to see the speaker drift into a cloud from which it as if they can no longer see what is right in front of their eyes anymore, and from which they inevitably drift off course to land on some random, completely unconnected island. The result is that we end up focusing on the very tip of the iceberg while ignoring the much more dangerous aspects that lurk hidden deep beneath the surface, ready and waiting to plunge us into the icy depths below. The glitch found here seems to have greatly affected Harrison and the coherence of her argument, simultaneously arguing that traditional slavery has continued up until now, yet that we shouldn't call it *slavery in the modern day*, all because we want to “respect” the experiences of those who survived pre-1865 slavery in the United States and the enduring trauma it inflicted on the generations that came afterwards. Yet, if the two are so remarkably similar as to be indistinguishable... what's the point of this exercise that Jenkins and Harrison are so concerned about again?

This hiccup causes even the best and brightest in the modern abolitionist movement to miss the forest for the trees, so one can't really fault Harrison and Jenkins for falling prey to it as well. But nonetheless, we must take note because something very important

is happening.

While Jenkins manages to at least tepidly acknowledge a connection between racial demographics and the term “modern-day slavery,” calling human trafficking a “racial injustice,” Harrison concludes her argument about how actual slavery – as well as historical trends of human trafficking of indigenous people – never went away, by stating that, “to say ‘modern-day slavery’ is to ignore the continuation of historical slavery into this century and today.” (Jenkins, 2022; Harrison, 2018)

Which... wait – *what*?

Something’s clearly off here. If we were to reduce this argument to its purely logical components, it would read something along the lines of, “A leads to B leads to C which in turn leads to Z, because Aspens don’t grow in Nova Scotia, which of course they do.”

Isn’t today the “modern-day?” Which means everything that happened in the past is “historical...” so if *historical* slavery is *still* happening in the *present*, why wouldn’t we be able to call it *modern-day* slavery? Isn’t slavery by any other name *still* slavery? According to Shakespeare, a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet, so wouldn’t slavery by any other name be just as foul?

I actually recall *Rick and Morty* doing a whole episode over this and concluding that, yes, slavery with extra steps is, in fact, still slavery. So why do we have to call it something else if we’re still dealing with the exact same thing? And moreover, who are we really protecting by calling it something *other* than slavery? Is this *really* about respecting those who were so deeply affected by this country’s long legacy of slavery and racial injustice?

Or is something else entirely at play?

Now don’t get me wrong – I believe that Harrison, Jenkins, the author of the National Survivor Network’s policy, and all the others here advocating this view are doing so with the very best of intentions. This isn’t some desperate “performative allyship.” They are legitimately trying, at least, to address a very real and very important elephant in the room. They’re just coming up short – and they’re doing so for an all-too-human reason. Unfortunately, one of the most important lessons that we must learn can be first seen here, and it is that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Thus, perhaps someone else can resolve this trip down Orwellian Doublespeak Lane for us. Maybe someone such as an individual who’s studied – and witnessed firsthand – these phenomena all around the world (not just in the United States), already thought about all these factors, and who isn’t trying to simultaneously address the elephant in the room all the while – and this is important – almost *subconsciously* miss the very essence of what they are talking about. Of course, this surely didn’t happen years before the last several attempts that we examined. I mean, if it’s not broken, *maybe* we don’t have to fix it after all – but if this is in fact the case, it means that we just spent a decade or so reinventing the wheel... yet again.

Enter Siddharth Kara, one of the world’s foremost experts on the topic of contemporary slavery and trafficking. Kara has written a number of bestselling books on the subject, including one that won the Frederick Douglass Book Prize. His work has been recommended by the Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, as well as by the head of the UN’s Office on Drugs and Crime, which addresses matters of human trafficking for the UN. Besides his work teaching some of the world’s only classes on human trafficking and modern slavery in the world at both Harvard and UC Berkeley,

Kara still manages to find time to consult for the UN, the US Government, and others on matters of human rights legislation and policy.

What is his position on this topic?

In 2011, Kara addressed the issue while simultaneously addressing the complex global economics of human trafficking. Trafficking, Kara argued, is simply a matter of supply and demand: if there is a demand for the products and services that trafficking provides, then there will be a ready supply of trafficked individuals to meet that demand (Kara, 2011). This is an insightful notion, despite the unpleasant nature of the realizations it leads to. What causes the demand for such trafficking and slave-produced goods?

The answer is us – the consumers.

Slavery, forced labor, and child labor are built into the supply chains that keep us fed, housed, and alive. There simply is no escaping this harsh and brutal truth. The existence of slavery in the modern world is upheld by a tangled superstructure of exploitation weaving its way through society, affecting us all and, importantly, implicating us in the gross maltreatment of our fellow brothers and sisters. Suddenly, it's really not so hard to understand why no one wants to address the problem directly, but rather talk in terms of conspiracy theories and contrived platitudes. To actually address the problem means fundamentally changing the way we live our lives and how we relate to other human beings in societies. It means accepting responsibility for the fact that *we are the problem*, not some imaginary Satanic transgender weirdo off abducting kids and harvesting their adrenal glands in the dungeon below John Podesta's basement.

That admission is more than many people's delicate egos can handle, hence the cognitive gymnastics we see happening in the preceding arguments and elsewhere in this discourse.

Further, Kara (2011) passionately argued that the term "human trafficking" greatly diminishes the very nature of the offense that we are discussing, arguing in favor of the term *modern slavery*. To see this, Kara, like the others we have examined here, contends that we must look to the historical Transatlantic Slave Trade – but unlike the others, Kara suggests we examine the historical slave trade through the lens of modern understandings of human trafficking, and not vice versa (Kara, 2011). Whereas Jenkins and Harrison insisted that human trafficking and historical slavery were two separate things, we find that historical slavery neatly fits the model of modern human trafficking: an action combined with a means and a purpose. Slaves were transported (an Action) from Africa to the New World through extreme force, fraud, or coercion (a Means) for the specific intent of labor or sexual exploitation (a clear and defined Purpose).

Thus, Kara concludes, *all of the victims of the Transatlantic Slave Trade were victims of human trafficking*. He goes a step further and points out that the only change between historical slavery and modern-day slavery has been linguistic: "‘human trafficking’ has come to replace the term, ‘slave trade.’" (Kara, 2011, p. 67). This reinforces Kara's point that calling this phenomenon "human trafficking" reduces the gravity of the offense, and further reveals the true problematic nature of Harrison's and Jenkins' arguments: they're simply obfuscating the true, heinous nature of the offense through wordplay, and not very clever wordplay at that (see Lopez, 2022). In fact, this entire discussion could have been avoided altogether by looking at the wording of the TVPA: slavery itself is listed as one of the "severe forms of trafficking in persons."

There is a connection between this linguistic doublespeak and the economics of human trafficking raised by Kara. Regardless of what we have been conditioned to believe about the nature of humanity's "progress" since 1865, Kara is swift to point out that modern-day labor trafficking is vastly more profitable and crosses into more industries than did its historical predecessor. And as Jenkins pointed out, modern-day slavery affects more people today than did its ancestor at its most popular point, and *anyone* can be a victim in the modern variant (Jenkins, 2022).

Kara provides the financial numbers and runs the cold hard math for us: adjusted for inflation, a slave in 1850 sold for \$9,500 - \$11,000, and produced a return on investment (ROI) of approximately 15-20% per year (Kara, 2011, p. 69). The typical slave in the world today sells for \$90 - \$420 and produces a ROI of *at least* 300-500% (UN, 2009; Kara, 2011, p. 69).

To me, this is a rather compelling argument for the use of the term "modern-day slavery" or even just "slavery" over "human trafficking" to discuss the phenomena in question, and I suspect it will be an equally compelling argument to most readers. However, there are always holdouts. In my research, I wanted to know what those who lived at the transition period from formal, traditional chattel slavery in America to more informal, "unconventional" means of slavery such as Jim Crow, segregation, and what we now refer to as "human trafficking" thought about all of this. During this search, I stumbled upon a speech given by none other than Frederick Douglass given to the American Anti-Slavery Society less than a month after Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse. I submit an excerpt of this speech to the holdouts as further evidence in support of Kara's view:

They would not call it slavery, but some other name. Slavery has been fruitful in giving itself names. It has been called "the peculiar institution," "the social system," and the "impediment," as it was called by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It has been called by a great many names, and it will call itself by yet another name; and you and I and all of us had better wait and see what new form this old monster will assume, in what new skin this old snake will come forth. (Quoted in Hepburn & Simon, 2013)

Douglass was right: slavery did begin to call itself by another name. As much as I and my colleagues might complain about how we're still having the same conversations as we were ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago when the TVPA was written, Douglass reveals a far more inconvenient and savage truth, and he did so more than 140 years before any of those whose words we've reviewed up to now:

We've been twiddling our thumbs since 1865.

So now, at least, we now have our layman's definition: "human trafficking" is simply best defined as the *slave trade*, and a "severe form of trafficking in persons," as it is termed in the TVPA of 2000, is simply *slavery*. There is nothing historical nor modern about it, but as in Douglass' words, it is merely the same old snake in a new skin. A viper is a viper is a viper.

This is, however, perhaps not the most useful definition from a criminological standpoint. For this we need to consider the motive and the methodology. Thus, for those approaching this issue from a criminal justice angle, the definition, "*a financial crime motivated by greed often facilitated by technology*" will serve you best, as long as you

keep Douglass' and Kara's definition in mind as well (Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021).

Yet, I feel that the true insight and wisdom of Douglass' words are lost without further examination. Yes, we now know exactly what it is that we are fighting and that is quite beneficial, but there is great wisdom to be gained from those who fought this battle the last time and won. Because again, from where I sit, it seems that we collectively lost a great deal of knowledge only to miraculously "rediscover" it once attention began to be paid to the issue of "trafficking" in the 1990s and early 2000s. It's as if the world is finally emerging from the dark ages once again and experiencing another renaissance period.

And as remarkable as this may seem, it has all happened before.

Slavery and human trafficking (the slave trade) have been around since humans first organized themselves into societies and began practicing agriculture (Busch, Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook-Heffron, 2018).²⁰ As Douglass noted, despite people's best efforts and notions of societal and human progress, slavery has never really gone away – it merely adapted and changed form to fit the new social paradigm. Slavery is the addiction that human societies just can't manage to kick – no matter how repulsive it may be, nations and civilizations find themselves rebuilding themselves from the ashes of old forms of slavery into new and improved ones, because slavery is just that useful to those who find themselves in positions of power and authority.

Americans like to pride themselves on having a society modeled on ancient Greece. Nothing brings to mind stronger notions of freedom, liberty, civilization, advanced thought, democracy, and "culture" than ancient Grecian civilization. In particular, ancient Athens is of special interest to the mythologized American past: a paragon of democracy, the literal shining city on the hill that was Mt. Olympus (see Hadas, 2023). Around 600 BCE, after a period of strong internal strife and conflict, Athens passed a law that abolished debt slavery, resulting in all enslaved citizens being freed across the city-state. Slavery had been defeated; liberty and justice were to reign over the land of the free. Bells tolled with news of democracy while feasts and celebrations were held across the region. A new day of economic development was dawning. Yet, merely 50 years later in 550 BCE, around 30,000 people were *still* found to be suffering in chattel slavery in Athenian silver mines alone.²¹

This has happened before.

A man such as Douglass surely would have been aware of this fact, not to mention the terrible foreshadowing that it offered. Slavery merely changed form after it was "abolished" in 1865, just as it had in 600 BCE Athens – and just as surely as it will once we address "human trafficking." Human societies, both ancient and modern, are structured in ways that simultaneously both promote and integrate trafficking – hence why slavery never truly went away. It's simply too incorporated into the foundations of supposedly "civilized" and "polite" society to be dismissed so simplistically through the changing of a law. Instead, slavery always metastasizes, coming back stronger in a slightly different, much less recognizable form. Shedding one's skin is how snakes heal and grow, after all.

Thus, the true nature of the enemy is revealed: and it's far more sinister than even the most far-reaching and consequential conspiracy theory could dare to imagine. Conspiracy, it must be perfectly understood, is *hard*: just think about how hard it is for

two people to keep a secret, let alone tens, hundreds, or thousands. To this end, it is clear that most conspiracy theorists have never served as project managers: most marital affairs, after all, end up becoming public simply because one of the two parties couldn't keep their mouth shut. Thus, one quickly finds that the true origin of the problem is not so much conspiracy as much as it is quirks of individual human nature that only compound themselves in social settings. Societies and entire civilizations, after all, are made up of many unique individuals, each with a separate, exclusive brain that hiccups in remarkably similar but very distinct fashion. Thus, to truly combat and ultimately defeat slavery, one must be willing to systematically examine the structures of our societies and drive it out from even the most ancient of bricks and mortar, giving it no room to evolve or adapt to a new environment.

Because snakes, it seems, are *very* good at adapting.

Psychology and its Role in Hiding Trafficking Phenomena

Human societies and social structures reflect the cognitive structures of their members. This should make at least some sort of intuitive sense to the reader. Humans built those societies, after all – they weren't put there for us by a bunch of horses with an interest in anthropology. And just as a building has an architect and a structure to it, so do civilizations, even if the design is admittedly more crowd-sourced. Every structure, be it a lean-to or a skyscraper, lived in its architect's mind long before it existed in reality. Thus, if one wants to analyze the structure of cultures of societies, one should seek to understand the minds and perceptions of those who build and maintain those constructs.

We have already seen good reason to take such an approach. For one, modern trafficking is much more about the relationship between the trafficker and the trafficked than it is about physical restraint. At the core of any relationship is a lot of really complex psychology. Thus, to understand both traffickers and their victims, we need to take a psychological approach to understanding the phenomena that we are trying to stop. Moreover, we need to take this a step further: we need to carefully examine how humans continue to uphold the superstructure, the serpentine form of slavery winding its way in and out of our everyday existence. To do this, we need to understand the cognitive processes and powers that influence the ways societies pass laws, draft policies, and establish institutions – and the ways in which individuals' beliefs can long after take on a life of their own and persist for many generations. If we are serious in our quest to extract every last remnant of slavery from our existence, we need to understand the very minds of those who helped bring it into our lives in the first place. They were, after all, not some Machiavellian, Darth Vader-like supervillains, but rather merely individual human beings – each influenced by a complex web of historical, economic, social, and political forces unto themselves, and each looking out for their self-interest in a world that would just as willingly destroy them as it would help them destroy others.

This is an unsettling point. After all, it's much easier to just call such people evil and be done with it, isn't it? Trying to understand the complex and myriad reasons people do such awful things is unpleasant, time-consuming, and tends to require vast work on our part that often leads to disturbing moral quandaries for which there may be no answers. This naturally goes against the human tendency to be as lazy as one possibly can be while still somehow managing to get the job done. Thus, it's really quite convenient that all these people with whom I disagree are all secretly members of the globalist

multidimensional transgender pedophilic deep state shadow government. It's really neat that my overly simplistic and self-gratifying worldview somehow magically happens to be the ontologically correct one! Why in the world would I want to challenge any of that?

Clearly, we need to apply the same critique to ourselves that we do to the rest of society if we are to make any progress in our endeavors. The Buddha is credited with the saying that, "your greatest weapon is your enemy's mind." Slavemongers since time immemorial have taken advantage of this simple fact and used the very words and desires of everyday people, as well as those opposing them, to ensure that others' eyes remain blind to their deeds. To protect against this, we need to know how our own minds work and the everyday cognitive pitfalls and traps that lead us into making such mistakes as we saw in the arguments as to why *human trafficking* is a more "respectful" term than *modern slavery*.

Yet, introspection is unbelievably difficult. In fact, it's almost impossible. To paraphrase neuroscientist David Eagleman, this is because our brains are absolutely the worst observers of our own experiences (Eagleman, 2011). Our minds are chock full of shortcuts, heuristics, and what often turn out to be outdated or completely malfunctioning signals that tell us that something that is occurring right in front of us actually isn't occurring while something that isn't happening actually is.

Have you ever walked into a clear glass door? It's a lot like that. Now imagine doing that on a near-constant basis and you've got a good idea of what a day in the life of your brain is like.

To a remarkable degree, we rely upon others to help us determine what is and what isn't real and what we're experiencing. But to make matters even worse, we also happen to suck at understanding and interpreting others' behavior (Hoffman, 2015). This is especially true when it comes to ascribing motivation to peoples' actions: we more often attribute the wrong motive to a behavior than we do the right one – in part because we quite often don't understand our own motivations (Eagleman, 2011; Hoffman, 2015). This can result in a feedback loop: we get bad information into our minds about what is really going on and look to others for guidance. They then unintentionally reinforce this with even more bad information, cementing an even further misperception in our minds. The process repeats and compounds upon itself to the point that perception becomes reality: what people perceive or believe to be the truth is often more important to them than what the truth actually is.

Yet, if we can't fully rely on our own perceptions and we can't rely entirely on others to correct the difference, how can we really be certain of anything? The key lies in understanding *how* the brain misfires and *how* this affects the issue being discussed. This allows one to check oneself and determine if one is engaging in too much self-congratulatory, "hey you've got the world all figured out" thinking and to somewhat rationally examine one's own work and beliefs. Simply being aware of these perceptual and cognitive phenomena helps reduce errors and increases one's understanding of complex topics. And since slavery is a very complex subject, the reader should have at least a few tools in their arsenal before continuing, so as to understand just *why* human trafficking is so misunderstood.

Chief among the vast and varied psychological phenomena involved here is what's best known as the **Dunning-Kruger effect**. To quote David Dunning himself,

Incompetence does not leave people disoriented, perplexed, or cautious. Instead, the incompetent are often blessed with an inappropriate confidence, buoyed by *something* that feels to them like knowledge” (Dunning, 2014). This *something* is, in a word, ignorance: a thing that, psychologically speaking, feels the exact same as having real knowledge about an issue. It is actually very difficult to perceive one’s own incompetence. For instance, an underperforming college student might take an exam and expect to do well, and then argue with their professor about how they deserved a higher grade than the D or F they actually earned. An elderly driver might think they’re going to perform well on their exam to renew their driver’s license only to be surprised when they rear-end another vehicle with the instructor sitting next to them. Yet, these people weren’t cheated or victims of bad luck: they simply overestimated their competence.

The Dunning-Kruger effect can be observed when an individual with little knowledge or expertise on a given matter assumes they have advanced knowledge/expertise, precisely because they lack the knowledge to *know* that, in fact, they lack the relevant knowledge (Kruger & Dunning, 2019). Simply put, think of your crazy uncle’s political opinions at Thanksgiving to understand this point: there’s no way on earth he has the requisite knowledge to back up a single word of what he’s saying, but that certainly doesn’t stop him from having the full confidence to pronounce it as if it’s the literal word of God himself. The effect really boils down to the fact that, just like a certain body part, everyone has an opinion, and they have full faith and confidence in that opinion – even when they’re directly contradicted by a respected expert in whatever field that they’re blindly blithering on about.

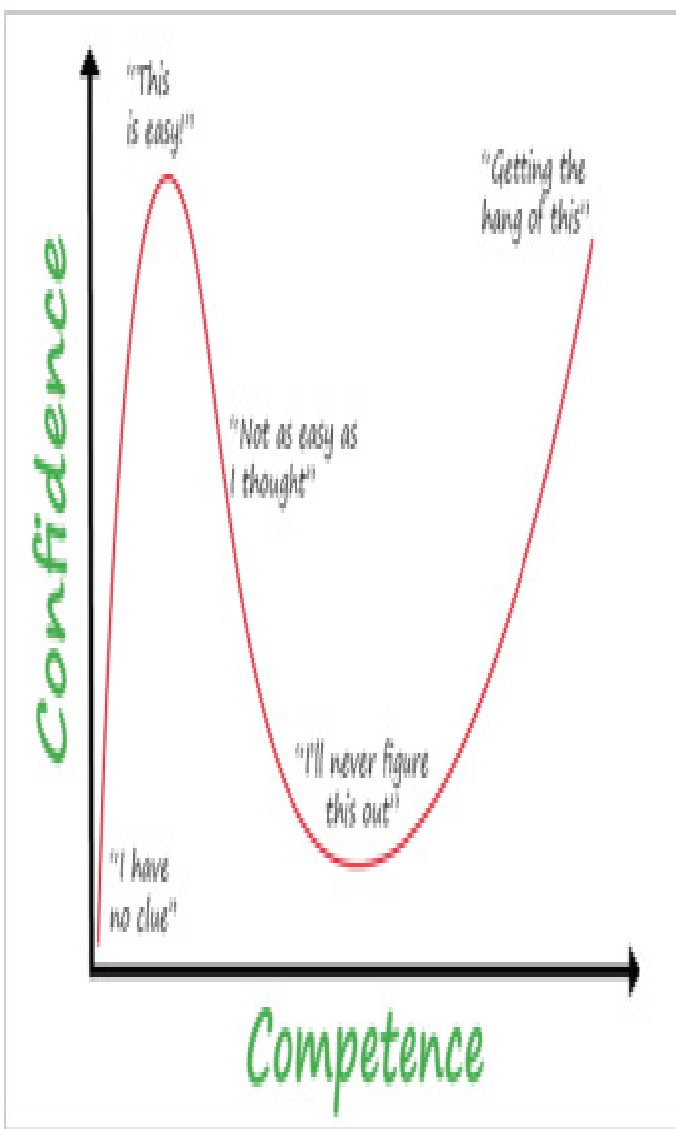


Figure 2.2. (Ball, 2024) *The Dunning-Kruger effect.*

This is a severe problem when it comes to the anti-trafficking movement. “Experts”

on the topic of human trafficking are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere at the same time. There are absolutely no standards to be found, which means anyone can call themselves an expert at any given moment – and this allows other qualities such as showmanship and sensationalism to take center stage. This leads to the mass propagation of myths and misinformation, not the least of which are QAnon, PizzaGate, and the whole Wayfair misinformation campaign. The harsh reality is that there are very few, if any, true experts in the field. In fact, the expertise of most of the “experts” can be found at the very beginning of the graph shown in figure 2.2, at the very peak of what has become colloquially known among psychologists and internet know-it-alls alike as “Mount Stupid.” Ignorance is nothing to be ashamed of so long as one tries to remedy the state whenever they find themselves in it.

This is an important aspect of the debate around slavery, due to the insane levels of misinformation, twisted logic, and politicized agendas that surround the issue, and so it will benefit the reader if we discuss this in some depth. Moreover, this is applicable not just to the discussion of slavery, but to most civilized discussions in our modern world. One doesn’t have to look far to find examples of a rigorously sound explanation being offered for a phenomenon, based upon *years* of research and experience by highly skilled people, then to have someone with no experience or credentials whatsoever call that answer an outright lie perpetrated as part of some grand conspiracy. You see, “common sense” tells them that the fact-based, tested, and empirically verified answer is simply *wrong*, and they are so confident in this belief that there is no argument or reason to be had with them (Nati, 2020). No amount of evidence can shake their confidence in this belief. They have ascended and planted their flag atop Mt. Stupid.

Let’s explore this through the system used to rank chess players. The Elo rating system, named after a Hungarian-American physics professor and master chess player of the same name, is used to rank the approximate skill levels of players in not only chess, but in other zero-sum games such as pool, baseball, basketball, American football, table tennis, and some board games, as well as more modern esports such as Call of Duty and Apex Legends. Two players with equal Elo ratings who play against each other are expected to win an equal number of games. If one player’s rating is 100 points higher than their opponent’s, that player is expected to score 64% of all wins; if the difference between two players is 200 points, then the player with the higher score is expected to win 76% of the time.

Here’s how this applies to the Dunning-Kruger effect: the average adult with no chess experience or training, such as the author, will typically beat the average five-year old at chess 100 times out of 100 under normal conditions (Nati, 2020). In fact, I’d probably feel pretty confident about my ability to beat *any* five-year old at chess assuming I’m not inebriated or otherwise compromised, and if five-year olds were the only opponents I took on, I’d be even more confident in my ability to win all the time. I might even start bragging about my chess prowess after a few beers.

Now, let’s say that a more capable player, an “experienced” amateur with an Elo rating of 1600, hears my bragging and challenges me to a match. Despite my confidence, the 1600-rated Elo player is going to absolutely wipe the floor with me, to the point that he’ll beat me, the typical adult with no experience or credentials, 100 times out of 100 on average. This is the beginning of the Dunning-Kruger effect: I would expect to win because of my high confidence but would lose due to my absolute incompetence. But

thanks to the strength of the human ego it wouldn't sink in that I was actually incompetent at chess until I'd lost *at least* several games to my challenger. Suddenly, my confidence would take a nosedive (a very unpleasant experience that it is human nature to avoid) at the same time I realized that the game is more complicated than I first realized. After all, I had only been competing against five-year olds.

Yet, this only gets worse. A top-rated, chess super grandmaster will typically beat the player with the 1600 Elo rating 100 times out of 100. It turns out that this distribution of skill is remarkably similar across all other domains which are measured by purely mental rather than physical ability (Nati, 2020). It's just really easy to measure in chess because there's a highly accurate rating system as well as a record of literally millions of games to refer to. Here's what I'm getting at: the top actors (AKA experts) in an intellectual domain will outperform even the experienced amateur by a margin similar to that by which the average adult would outperform the typical five-year old. Now, that amateur might manage to come up with a few moves that make our grandmaster stop and think for a bit, but their chances of winning a match are effectively nil. To the grandmaster, the author with his complete lack of expertise and know-how wouldn't even register as a challenge – rather, I'd be likened to an annoying gnat merely to be swatted. To the grandmaster, there would be no measurable difference between myself and the five-year old in terms of how easy we are to beat. Our chances of winning are literally zero. *Zilch*. Nada.

When it comes to Elo ratings, what is actually being quantified is one's ability to comprehend a position on a chess board, consider the factors which make it favorable to the two parties in the game, and to choose a maneuver to best improve one's own position (Nati, 2020). If one can manage that better than someone else on a repeated and regular basis, they'll have a higher Elo rating. Thus, the chess-playing ability of someone like Wei Yi (don't worry, I had to Google him myself) to comprehend and process a position in a chess game surpasses the average, untrained adult by a ratio that is greater than the average adult's ability compared to the five-year old. Again, recall that this performance ratio transfers to other intellectual domains such as mathematics, biology, criminology, and history. Thus, the "super grandmasters" of these fields have an ability to analytically process and comprehend domain-specific information in a way that is so far beyond even the experienced amateur that their rationales would be absolutely impenetrable to the typical person.

Thus, we can begin to see the problem with applying "common sense" – AKA, untrained, uncritical thought – to criticize expert level analysis and opinion. It's quite like a random five-year old turning up at *your* job and insisting that they can do it better (Nati, 2020). First of all, you would be quite insulted that a five-year old thought they could not only do your job but do it *better* than you. But much, much more importantly, that five-year old would not only be wrong – dead wrong – but they would be unable to even comprehend the *explanation* of why they were wrong. Then the child would throw a tantrum, *still* failing to understand and *still* believing that they're right and that the whole adult world is involved in a vast conspiracy against them. Sort of like "researchers" and "experts" who have graduated from Google University. Or those who read a book or pass an uncredentialed, bunco "certification" course and begin advertising themselves as an "expert" on human trafficking, child safety, or both.

Adding to the Dunning-Kruger effect is the problem of what is referred to as **implicit**

Implicit bias. Implicit bias is a kind of bias that happens instantly. Consider it as a sort of filter through which the mind observes the world: everything is colored through that lens or filter, whether you want it to be or not. As such, despite these biases being absolutely unintentional and completely normal to every human being, they nevertheless greatly affect our judgements, decisions, and behaviors in ways that we need to be aware of.

Not all of these biases are bad. A *bias* in psychology is merely a “tendency” to do something. Biases help the brain make decisions, getting us through the day. Without them, we’d barely be able to function. In survival situations, we still need to rely on these biases to avoid danger and stay alive. It’s the consequences of these biases that are often undesirable – and humans have a lot of implicit biases to keep track of. To this point, it’s much less helpful to speak about implicit bias in general than it is to address specific biases that are of particular concern to our work.

One of the chief biases that makes work in this field so difficult is **confirmation bias**. Confirmation bias is the tendency to interpret new facts, information, and ideas in ways that reinforce our pre-established beliefs – even if that new information directly contradicts those beliefs. Information that is deemed too contradictory to core beliefs is actually discarded by the brain outright. To state this bias simply, it’s *really* hard to change our minds once we’ve developed an opinion on a subject, all because our brains are wired in a way as to prevent us from changing our minds, thereby protecting our sensitive egos.

While the implications for society and political polarization are vast, confirmation bias is truly a kicker when it comes to dealing with human trafficking and related phenomena, given all the myths and misunderstandings about the subject. People really do want to believe that there’s a vast, evil conspiracy out there to blame for this, rather than coming to grips with the fact that they’re part of the problem, and they sometimes react aggressively (or even violently) when confronted with facts that show them to be mistaken. Likewise, a lot of people don’t want to believe that they’ve been taken advantage of, admit how bad their situation really is and that they need help, or face the reality that they’re being controlled and trafficked by another. Confirmation bias is one of the worst enemies we have to confront in this fight.

Consider a member of a cult. Extracting a person from a cult and from that web of belief takes a lot of time and careful effort, because they’ve been psychologically programmed to believe that anyone from outside the cult is actively trying to lie and deceive them. Our own brains, minds, and systems of beliefs aren’t really that different: they’re all desperately trying to protect our core beliefs about the world – beliefs which may be horribly, horribly misinformed – to protect our sense of self and identity. In a very real way, we’re all members of our own, unique individualized cults, and this greatly affects how we perceive the world.

No matter how impartial or open-minded one may believe themselves to be, everyone suffers from some form of confirmation bias. There are several forms of confirmation bias that we need to be aware of in the discussions to follow. The most common form of confirmation bias comes through *interpretation*, wherein we interpret information in a way that confirms our core beliefs. Yet, this bias also strikes us through biased *attention*, where we selectively focus on information that confirms our beliefs and values while discounting or outright ignoring information that doesn’t (Allahverdyan &

Galstyan, 2014). Consider when we read about the typical “John” sting and are looking at the mugshots of those arrested: does it really surprise you that the guy from down the street whom you don’t get along with got busted for soliciting a prostitute? Of course not, he’s probably up to all sorts of sleazy things in his free time. But what about when it’s your Pastor, your childhood friend, the devoted family man and loyal husband, or the esteemed neighborhood cop whose mugshot appears? Well, then clearly there was some sort of misunderstanding. Even if it’s true, nobody’s perfect, after all. Everybody does it, you might even say. It just doesn’t quite capture your attention as much as the cases that reinforce your pre-established notions, and this causes you to miss the forest for the trees. Your mind doesn’t catch on to the fact that the arrest of the highly regarded and picture-perfect person fits a larger pattern.

But there’s one more way that confirmation bias can affect us: through *biased memory*. Memory is far from the perfect and infallible thing that we so often characterize it as being, and this affects the phenomenon being examined in more ways than one may think possible. Now, memory is complicated and will be examined in depth when we discuss trauma, so what is important to understand now is that confirmation bias alters the way we recall and remember past events. The brain selectively recalls data that supports and reaffirms our preconceived notions and beliefs, all the while dismissing and forgetting the data that doesn’t support them or otherwise contradicts them in some way (Frost, et al., 2015). Again, to paraphrase the great David Eagleman, the brain is the worst observer of what it experiences, to the point that it can’t even recall what it has already seen without distorting the memory through a lens that makes it predetermined to agree with its assumptions. This becomes a problem with survivor testimony: due to the very nature of memory (which gets even worse when you add trauma to the mix), survivors can’t recall their experiences completely accurately, because literally no one can. This often makes prosecution and investigation a nightmare, as victims may genuinely seem to “change” their stories to reflect new information presented to them – a defense attorney’s dream come true. But because memory is so misunderstood, victims and survivors are perceived as being “untruthful” or “problematic.” In reality, however, there is no “perfect” victim.

Confirmation bias also plays an important role in settling **cognitive dissonance**. Cognitive dissonance occurs when one holds contradictory values, beliefs, attitudes, or perspectives about the same thing or is confronted with evidence that contradicts their worldview (Tzeses, 2020). Consider, for example, a smoker who is aware that nicotine causes cancer, but nonetheless smokes a pack a day – or an environmentally conscious vegan who drives a gas-guzzling SUV. When our behavior doesn’t line up with our internal beliefs, we experience cognitive dissonance – and the way we settle this dissonance often leads to incredibly visible (at least to others) displays of seeming hypocrisy that the hypocrite just doesn’t really pick up on. That’s because the mind has settled the internal struggle – the dissonance – by rationalizing away the discrepancy to protect itself, and the human capacity for self-justification is virtually unlimited. Consider what we just discussed about confirmation bias and how hard it is to change our minds and realize that these are not separate systems of the mind, but rather overlapping and compounding ones. Mistakes certainly may have been made, after all, but not by me.

Once a pattern of thinking has been established, it is remarkably difficult to break

out of that way of thinking. This fact can be best illustrated by an incident that occurred in 1663. In Germany that year, the partially fossilized remains of a woolly rhinoceros, a woolly mammoth, and a narwhal were discovered. Now, people of that time had no concept of dinosaurs or of extinct animals that roamed the Earth before humanity, nor of the science of fossilization. Darwin would not come along with his *On the Origin of Species* for another two centuries, and the field of paleontology largely hadn't been invented yet. However, the people of that time had the mental schema for what a unicorn looked like, and what their theoretical bone structure would look like. So instead of considering that they were dealing with something unknown and thus carefully reconstructing the skeletons and putting connecting joints and parts together, the amateur archeologists took the individual pieces to build what their limited worldview insisted simply *had* to be the bones of a deceased unicorn. This resulted in one of the worst fossil reconstructions ever attempted.



Figure 2.3. (Sachs, n.d.) *The Magdeburg Unicorn.*

While this may seem like a humorous anecdote, the implications for our field are

actually quite vast. Consider the moral crusader of a Pastor who fiercely advocates for abstinence and against pre-marital sex, yet who gets busted for soliciting a prostitute. Similarly, weigh the case of the decorated sex crimes detective who has a storied career investigating crimes against women and children in his community, only to be arrested for raping multiple women in his custody. These (very real) perpetrators settled their internal dissonance between their beliefs and their behaviors by telling themselves that what they were doing *really wasn't as bad as what everyone else was doing*, hence their surprise, excuses, and anger when they were finally held accountable. Moreover, the vast array of behavior displayed by trauma survivors is enough to trigger cognitive dissonance in many investigators and advocates: is this person being really truthful, they wonder, or are they just pretending? After all, the way the perpetrator or survivor presents doesn't necessarily match with the way the investigator/advocate was expecting them to present (Merlan, 2023). In effect, we end up creating our own Magdeburg unicorns all the time because of our lack of knowledge on the subject, causing grave and systematic injustice throughout the entire world.

This aspect of human psychology extends into the formation of conspiracy theories and the establishment of connections between disparate objects that actually don't exist – a predominant issue in matters of trafficking and slavery, as we've seen. **Pareidolia** is the human bias/tendency to assign significance or meaning to something so as to interpret meaning or a pattern where there is none (see Lavin, 2021). The constellations are a well-known example of this: a spattering of stars against the dark backdrop of the night sky are perceived as being organized into shapes by the human eye. Of course, the individual stars that make up the constellations are in no way related to one another, being millions of light years away from one another. The famous 1976 NASA photo of the “Face on Mars” is a perfect example of pareidolia, where light and shadow were interpreted by the human mind to form a “face” (and thus, obviously evidence of extraterrestrials).

We are actually programmed to see faces and objects where there are none as a byproduct of our biology. Thousands of years ago, it would have served us well to have been able to look at a forest line and spot two eyes, a nose, and the mouth that formed the face of a potential predator. Over time, we evolved a mental mechanism to help us identify such patterns in nature: *pareidolia* (Uscinski & Parent, 2014; Lavin, 2021). Then we humans began to live in safe environments where we didn't have to spot the literal eyes of the tiger hiding in the nearest shrubbery, and the mechanism lost its use, but it still stuck around in our brains. Of course, faces are a very familiar concept to human beings. We see them every day, after all, and familiarity plays a critical role in what one sees when pareidolia kicks in (English, 2021). Thus, we see faces on planets, in electrical outlets, and in blurry photographs of “ghosts.”

We all engage in pareidolia. However, certain circumstances and factors heighten the phenomenon to critical levels, such as when we experience high levels of chaos. When confronted with matters and stressors that are beyond one's control, it is human to try to assign some meaning to them in an attempt to reestablish some sort of control over one's world (Uscinski & Parent, 2014). Humans, it must be understood, don't like lacking control over their world. Even if this control is completely fictional, the human mind largely cannot cope without some belief that it exerts control upon that which affects it and which is, rationally, actually beyond its control. This typically presents

itself in the form of, *there has to be a reason for whatever has happened, even if whatever happened was completely and totally random.* We assign meaning to the meaningless in order to assure ourselves that we have some control even when we really don't. It's kind of adorable from a top-down perspective, but this behavior can have dramatic consequences.

Pareidolia leads to **apophenia**, which is the tendency to be psychologically overwhelmed by “meaningful” coincidences (Lavin, 2021). Apophenia leads to a lot of things that are relevant to this discussion, but as a simple example consider the gambler who sees meaningful patterns in their wins and losses and then risks even more based on those patterns. Another example is that of “truthers” who imagine false flags behind events that have triggered their cognitive dissonance. Apophenia is the first stage of the development of schizophrenia, and conspiracy theorists share much in common with schizophrenics – particularly a proneness to magical thinking (English, 2021; Kumareswaran, 2014). Typically, whatever is most available and or familiar in one's mind is what one will identify as being to blame for whatever bad thing happens (English, 2021; Lavin, 2021; Uscinski & Parent, 2014). If one is concerned about communists, then one will see communist infiltration all over the place.²² If one is worried about pedophiles, suddenly everyone will become a pedophile. If one is of a religious persuasion, then the malicious hand of the devil will be behind all evil. Think of it this way: if one believes that reptilians secretly control the entire world, who's going to be inexorably blamed when something bad inevitably goes wrong? Such limited worldviews can set the stage for disastrous self-fulfilling prophecies.

This all worsens when there is more noise to analyze: because of pareidolia, people perceive more signals in the noise than actually exist. Hence why conspiracy theories prosper in times of uncertainty and crisis: there's simply much more noise to sift through than is normal (Uscinski & Parent, 2014). All of a sudden, there are more breadcrumbs to bake into a cake because suddenly we need to exercise more control over the world since we, internally, feel that we are *losing* control. The more chaos there is, the more uncertainty, social change, and potential danger one perceives to be experiencing, the more we sense this lack of control, and thus the more we project our fear out into the world in a desperate attempt to re-assure ourselves that we've totally got this and that things aren't wildly spinning out of control.

Sooner or later, somebody somewhere is going to make a Type I error, and because of the way our brains work, someone else is going to reinforce that false positive as being correct instead of false. Suddenly, random numbers turn into enigmatic codes, written passages into sacred scripture, and otherwise random and unconnected events into the coordinated steps of an elaborate plot. And just like with schizophrenia, one's entire sense of reality and identity warps to revolve entirely around the next hint, the next clue – the next *drop* – to fill in the missing pieces of the puzzle. Almost as if from out of the blue, it's abruptly very hard, if not downright impossible, to change these folks' minds or convince them that there really *isn't* a pattern where they see one, and the meme keeps spreading with each person it comes into contact with.

Then there is the intersection of prejudice and **ingroup-outgroup bias**. When it comes to psychology, we all have prejudices, just as we all have biases. A remarkable amount of this comes down to how we identify as members of a group and relate to other human beings. Humans are social animals after all, and we like to feel as though

we belong somewhere. An in-group is simply a group which we, psychologically, identify with. An out-group is a group that we don't identify with. Ingroup bias, AKA ingroup favoritism, is the tendency (bias) for people to give preferential treatment to those who belong to their same group. If you're not part of the group, you might be (and probably are) out of luck.

This gives rise to all sorts of unfortunate things such as tribalism and intergroup conflict. What is essential to understand at this point is that this bias hinders our ability to objectively analyze problems and it reinforces our tendency to blame some undefinable *other* – only instead of some *other* who's simply not *us*, we blame an *other* who's not *one of us*. For example, if your church is being plagued by a sexual abuse scandal, you might be inclined to attribute it all to the work of mysterious, unknown Satanists instead of accepting the fact that predators really do lie that close to home and that they fooled you. Simply put, we look for scapegoats instead of examining how we, and those like us, may be contributing to the problem.

This also quite problematically influences how we view victims and offenders, and how we relate one to the other – as well as how we assign blame for actions either may take. We are simultaneously more likely to be critical of those who are not like us than those who are, while empathizing with those who are more like us than those who are not. This can, and does, influence the quality-of-service that victim advocates provide for those they are advocating for, it affects the ways that police, judges, lawyers, and others in the justice system who commit crimes get lighter sentences than those who are not, and it impacts the dynamics of family court and custody battles. These dynamics are not to be taken lightly, as they form the cognitive basis that creates the larger societal structures we seek to examine.

Central to all of these phenomena is the concept mentioned previously known as **tribalism**. Humans are innately social creatures – we gather together into groups to achieve goals that we as individuals cannot accomplish. Yet despite this disposition, we also tend to divide ourselves into smaller subgroups or tribes, and we do this by identifying differences between those who are members of our group (our in-group) and those who are not (our out-group). To put it simply, tribalism is responsible for the myriad ways that humans *other* fellow human beings, or determine them to be members of the *other*. Sexism, racism, and pretty much all the -isms that lead to discrimination and forms of *othering* are forms of tribalism made manifest. Tribalism leads to humans organizing themselves into unique societies (tribes) that are reflective of the cultures and values of their respective members, and it leads to the tribe protecting those values from any who so much as merely appear to threaten them. This is why *others*, such as foreigners or immigrants to the tribal society, are greeted with skepticism and hesitancy by members of the tribe – and also deemed less “human” and deserving of human rights. If a person is no longer an actual person, is subjecting them to forced labor conditions *really* slavery?

Tribalism is at the core of such phenomena as genocide and slavery, and it plays a critical role in explaining human trafficking. A corollary of tribalism is known as **terror management theory**. Terror management theory argues that human awareness of our inevitable mortality dramatically influences human behavior and society – and not necessarily in positive ways (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2015). While humans are hardly the only sentient animals on the planet, they are the only ones known at the

time of this writing to be aware of their slow but inevitable march to the grave. In turn, entire cultures are built around the resulting anxiety this creates; entire religions have been founded to alleviate our anxieties about our ultimate fate. This drive can allow us to find immense, deep meaning in the worst injustices and suffering that humans can experience, finding the strength to survive death and destruction of the worst kind. But it can also lead to us to inflict those same horrors upon a new population just a few years after we declare, “never again” (Frankl, 2006; Bashir & Goldberg, 2018; Hirschberger, Pyszcynski, & Ein-Dor, 2010). This behavior plays a critical role in our thinking and in the ways we relate to (and subjugate) others. It also plays a role in the formation of tyrannical death cults.

Terror management theory posits that existential terror – which can be caused by *anything* that threatens our existence, be it real or merely perceived – is the reason we adopt the various cultural worldviews that we do. Political ideologies, religious beliefs, and much more are all explained by this attempt to latch onto meaning, to give a philosophy to our lives in a chaotic and unpredictable world (see Williamson, 2022). And when we become particularly frightened, we isolate ourselves among those who share our beliefs and worldviews; we become politically polarized and we become hostile to those who do *not* share our beliefs or characteristics. Much of the previous discussion on terminology can be explained through terror management theory: the way slavery has metastasized is, in a word, terrifying. Anyone can be a victim, not just those belonging to a particular disposable subset of society. This makes us frightened and extremely vulnerable to manipulation, and it also predisposes us to committing horrors that we might otherwise not be willing to be complicit in (Azarian, 2023).

To see this effect in action (as well as how vulnerable we all are to psychological manipulation) we need only consider how a group of psychologists successfully managed to weaponize hot sauce out of all things. Experimental subjects (college students) were divided into two randomly assigned groups by the scientists after first having been surveyed about their political beliefs. The participants were then tasked with writing a short essay: in the control group, this essay was on a “neutral” topic, such as the next exam they faced in college. In the experimental group, the subjects were told to consider their own death: what emotions this aroused in them, and what they thought happens when they die. Then, members of each group were introduced to someone who either insulted or respected the participants’ political worldviews. The subjects then had to determine how much fiery hot sauce the individual commenting on their worldview had to consume (McGregor, 1998).

The results were as stunning as they were predictable: those in the control group did not, on average, force a person who was critical of their worldview to consume more hot sauce. Neither did those in the experimental group who received positive feedback on their political stances. However, those in the experimental group who had their worldview threatened chose to significantly *increase* the amount of peppery hot sauce given to those with an opposing worldview.

Keep in mind that this all occurred merely because subjects were reminded of their *eventual* mortality. Imagine what we would collectively be willing to do if we were made to believe that there was a real, impending threat to our existence: such as war, climate change, or the mere shifting of cultural norms that affect our way of life.²³ Change is inevitable, and this fact alone is enough to drive many human beings into existential

crisis. What happened in the safe setting of a university laboratory with mere hot sauce happens all the time in the real world, but with actual means of inflicting permanent harm on another. Change always involves an element of fear, hence why we resist it so much: the status quo remains the status quo for a reason. Much to this point, and in furtherance of our discussion, is how this mortality salience can even impact how we think about crime and punishment (Rosenblatt, et al, 1989).

All of this contributes to the formation and establishment of **social, cultural, and religious norms**. Simply put, these norms determine what we consider to be “normal.” Norms determine what behaviors we are more willing to tolerate and excuse as being part of everyday aspects of society and what we are more prone to consider intolerable. For example, if one lives in an environment where sex trafficking is a daily, *normal* occurrence, then one isn’t going to think too much about either trafficking or being trafficked sexually. One will typically resist any effort to change what one believes is *normal*, especially if it comes from what is perceived to be an outside (especially *foreign*) source. Norms can vary from one culture to the next, from one society to another, and from one religion to an alternative one. Anyone who’s attended Ju’mah at a Mosque on Friday only to attend Mass on Sunday morning can tell you how different the traditions are. Similarly, the experiences are further distinguished by the specific culture and society in which the religious service occurs: a Latin Mass in a Cathedral is going to be far different than one that takes place where Christianity isn’t popular.

Norms are also notoriously difficult to change, often due to how well established they are in society for some of the above-mentioned reasons. Some people dedicate their entire lives to changing harmful norms, often seeing only miniscule progress. This is in large part due to the way norms interact with human biases: human cognitive biases give rise to norms being established, while norms simultaneously help to establish those very biases in humans as they are growing up. Once again, we see a feedback loop: a common issue when examining slavery and another one that readers should train themselves to look for. Cycles are everywhere when it comes to trafficking, from feedback cycles to historical cycles (recall Athens) to the dynamics of slavery itself.

This brings us to why it is so important to understand these norms. Frankly stated, these norms help perpetuate trafficking (including sex trafficking) and the concept that trafficking is a normal and accepted part of society (Cohen, 2009; Belles, 2015). Consider how we glorify the pimp in western culture. Snoop Dogg is a pimp – an actual, admitted pimp – and sings songs about beating women while bragging about selling them to top athletes (Rolling Stone, 2013). Dwayne Johnson, AKA The Rock, is marketed as a “pimp” and was called “Big Pimpin’” for a long time – after all, *pimpin’ ain’t easy*. We even “pimp” our rides and our houses.²⁴ Kid Rock’s hit song *Cowboy* literally features the singer detailing how he wants to start an escort service. I can recall how popular the song was among my Boy Scout troop when it first came out. The adult Scout leaders actually *encouraged* the younger boys, aged 9 or 10 (fourth grade) in the troop to sing it, razzing me because I didn’t know the words and thus didn’t particularly care to sing it. From this example alone, one can see how important it is to critically examine the role of culture in perpetuating trafficking activities.

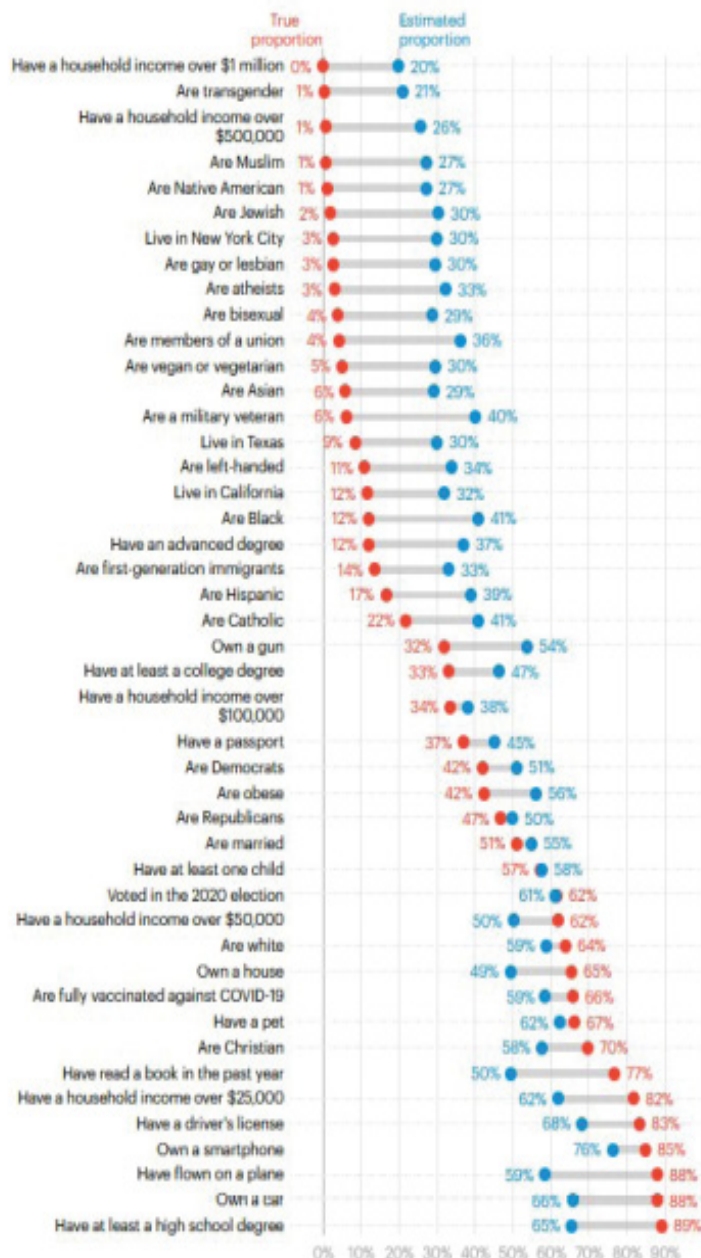
Nor is this merely an American issue. As norms vary by culture, society, and religion, so, too, does the way they affect and manifest trafficking phenomena. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is common for young women to go to work for employers abroad to support

their families. Upon accepting an offer, an “employer” will then often have the young woman undergo a mystic ceremony conducted by a shaman to bind her to the employer wherein she is made to believe that if she works hard, she will be rewarded, but if she is lazy or abandons her post, bad luck will befall her and her family back home (Nagle & Oswananoye, 2016). The employer, of course, is a sex trafficker – and the job he has promised her doesn’t exist. But by the time the young woman arrives in Europe and realizes this, she has been tricked through a combination of technology and religious folk belief into believing that she must comply with her trafficker. The shaman is, of course, in on the scam, and often continues to play a role in the woman’s exploitation long after she has left Africa.

Chapter Summary: The Serpent Revealed

It has been said that nothing is ever what it seems, and this clearly applies to human trafficking. Slavery takes many forms, creating a dark and destructive force in society, encompassing the world as Jörmungandr and connecting the past to the present. While the beast itself remains hidden from view, its effects are ubiquitous and resemble constructs of another creature, as described in the next chapter. It is poorly understood and obscured, yet by examining common myths and misconceptions we begin to get a sense of what we are up against. Our task is enormous, and our opponent has remained unbeaten throughout the course of human history. To make matters worse, our own allies engage in self-defeating doublespeak and refusal to acknowledge truth. Hence, we have wasted a lot of time and a lot of resources, not to mention the fact that many lives have been lost or irrevocably altered.

Yet, not all is lost. We have made significant strides in identifying our foe, and we now have some idea of the psychological warfare that it has been waging on us for millennia. And while we may have allowed slavery to retreat, resupply, and reemerge after 1865, we have a vast arsenal of new tools and new knowledge with which to combat it today. While the stakes have never been higher, the war is far from over – indeed, it is just beginning.



YouGov

Poll data: January 14 - 20, 2022 | @YouGovAmerica

Figure 2.4. (Orth, 2022) *Americans overestimate the size of minority groups and underestimate the size of majority groups. The psychosocial phenomena described in this chapter explain the errors in estimation seen in the graph.*

Special thanks to my dear friend and colleague Samantha Searls of the IJPC for her work in compiling a list of these damaging myths, which I draw from here.

² You really thought I was exaggerating when I said, “no one knows what they’re doing,” didn’t you?

³ See Greenwood, 2019 for an example of this. Additionally, with this context now in mind, it is useful to reconsider the idea of having victims of trafficking use hand signals to signal for help to see just what an inane concept this is.

⁴ The Satanic Temple – contrary to modern traditional Satanism – was founded by a notorious Neo-Nazi, so it would really be great if everyone would stop reacting and giving them attention. See Appendix 1 materials for this chapter for additional information, specifically Dead Domain, 2024.

⁵ More to the point, I’ve never once seen a Satanist wearing bracelets after one of these operations. In fact, I’ve recovered children from horribly abusive situations thanks to tips from concerned, eagle-eyed Satanists, as well as their much more interesting spiritual cousins, Luciferians. While offenders come in all forms and consist of all backgrounds, and with the exception of a few Neo-Nazi linked groups on the fringes of the far right (see Winston, 2023; Hughes, 2023), Satanists typically don’t exploit children *en masse*, and they certainly don’t traffic them. It doesn’t fit into the “respectable” profile of this type of predator. Winston, 2023 and Hughes, 2023 are very, *very* important citations; however, it’s important to understand that sextortion is less about sex than it is something far darker (Berg, 2024). See chapters 10 and 11 and the associated supplementary resources for additional insight into these aspects.

⁶ Much to my upcoming point, all sex trafficking fronts (*not* prostitution fronts) disrupted in this operation had been in existence for a period of months to *years*, right under law enforcement’s nose, and would have continued to operate had we not specifically targeted them.

⁷ Quoted in (Bordow, 2023).

⁸ The reader is encouraged to review Martin & Hill, 2019 for an excellent analysis of the data on this topic.

⁹ Times Editorial Board, 2022.

¹⁰ Refer to the first chapter to see how victims, even child victims, of trafficking are often counted as “traffickers” and “Johns,” revealing how such propaganda hides even further revictimization through the criminal justice system.

¹¹ Consider the psychology around first impressions and the saying, “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”

¹² This isn’t the first time something like this has happened. The 2015 film *The Gallows* led a viral marketing campaign for the movie by spreading the admittedly made-up “Charlie Charlie Challenge,” which involved placing two pencils on top of one another and asking the “spirit” of Charlie to answer a yes/no question. A Vatican exorcist, *Christianity Today*, and the *Catholic News Agency* warned it was a sign of “rising demonic activity” while Pat Robertson himself warned that the “game” would “destroy human beings” (Lawson, 2015; Smith, 2015). All this occurred despite the fact that the game was *entirely fabricated* as a marketing stunt, relying on fundamental principles of gravity and pareidolia: the human tendency to see patterns where there are none, such as with stellar constellations (Knibbs, 2015). The intersection of religiously-driven moral panics and human trafficking is incredibly important to understand, especially in the context of human trafficking and child safety. This will be a recurring theme throughout this work.

¹³ It is important to note that MK-ULTRA was a real thing. However, at this point in our examination that is all that is relevant to the topic.

¹⁴ The author is admittedly simplifying things a great deal here, but for the discussion at hand the issue can be set aside until much further down the road. See Iglesias, 2024 and Dobrokhoto, Grozev, & Weiss, 2024 for more information.

¹⁵ This is not to say that targeted and coordinated harassment campaigns do not exist, as per the Kiwi Farms website and the Church of Scientology's "Fair Game Law." Rather, instances of alleged gang-stalking are distinct from orchestrated harassment campaigns.

¹⁶ In case you're wondering, yes, this did in fact happen.

¹⁷ Quoted in (Belles, 2015, p. 55).

¹⁸ Please, for the love of all that is sacred, don't actually do this. I am being rhetorical here.

¹⁹ This is quite discernable in all the articles presented: the focus is on experiences of Black Americans at the exclusion of Black Africans in the name of "inclusivity."

²⁰ In the rare event that a Pleistocene archeologist happens to be reading this, I freely admit that I'm oversimplifying, and in fact am actively misstating, a great deal here (see Graeber & Wengrow, 2023, p. 127-128). In my defense, I felt that the entire rewriting of human history is a task best left until the end of this collective body of work rather than the very beginning.

²¹ Do you see the loophole? Citizens couldn't be enslaved – ancient Athenian law, however, said nothing about non-citizens. The ancient Greeks in effect had their own 13th Amendment.

²² One of the most enduring lessons of this book is that this has *all* happened before: one need only consider the McCarthy era to see the need to break these cycles.

²³ The implications are well documented in the accompanying supplemental reading for this chapter, ranging from everyday stereotypes to election outcomes to the "Axis of Evil."

²⁴ A trend toward almost exclusively criticizing black and hip-hop culture is already visible with these frequently-cited examples. This reveals the shallowness of the analysis found to date in virtually all of the literature on the topic of societal norms and their role in human trafficking.

Chapter 3

A Spider's Web: The Vastness of Slavery

“Facts are stubborn, but statistics are more pliable.”

– Mark Twain

Experts on human trafficking are both everywhere and nowhere to be found at once, with many who simply have no idea what they're talking about often being heralded as renowned legends of child safety and heroic liberators of trafficked women from pimps and slavers. Similarly, there are a lot of nonsense statistics thrown around when it comes to such matters.

Let's examine some of these common but nonsensical statistics often used to bring attention to the issues of human trafficking and child exploitation, and often to fundraise off them. First up for examination is the oft-cited claim that there are 100,000 to 150,000 people, many of them children, being held as commercial sex slaves in the United States alone (see, for example, DeliverFund, 2023). This is a rather shocking statistic, and it's no surprise that it's so frequently used to illustrate the scope of the problem. Yet, it originates from two very shaky, if not outright false, other statistics.

One is the claim that over 2,000 children go missing every day, or approximately over 800,000 every year – a frequent talking point among politicians and child safety advocates alike (see Collier & Schwartz, 2023; Kraut, 2023; LaCapria, 2020; Reuters Fact Check, 2021). Yet, it is a completely bogus and inflated number. There is a kernel of truth in this number, just as there is in any myth, and that comes from the number of reports filed by law enforcement regarding runaway children every year. Here's the kicker though – if a single child runs away more than once, each runaway attempt gets its own separate report, even though it's for the same child. If two or more jurisdictions are involved, each jurisdiction files its own report.

If a single child runs away 20 separate times, 20 separate reports will be filed for that one (1) child (LaCapria, 2020). If the case involves two jurisdictions, such as if the child crosses the border into another township, those 20 reports become 40 reports. Suddenly, the 800,000 number just doesn't seem all that intimidating. Yet, we find ourselves facing another kicker: no one actually knows where the 800,000 number actually originated, as it's twice the average number of just over 400,000 reports for each of the years 2018 and 2019, and more than twice the number for each of 2020 and 2021. This number is further rendered wildly inaccurate given that the vast majority of children who succeed in running away are found and subsequently returned to their

homes.

Further examination is clearly warranted to see just how much **moral panic** is behind this claim and where the real threat of trafficking lies. Moral panic is a mass movement or concern that is predicated on exaggerated or outright false perceptions, claims, or information beyond that which actually threatens human society (Frothingham, 2023). As an example, consider the common fear of sharks and shark attacks. Many people will downright refuse to swim in the ocean for fear of becoming one of these predator's next meals, even though shark attacks are extremely rare. Approximately ten lives are lost each year to shark attacks worldwide, with an annual average of 74 total unprovoked bites from these animals (Laybourne, 2023; Earl, 2023). That's not a sizeable threat when you consider it accounts for the entire planet for a year's time – in fact, it's a miniscule threat, especially when one realizes that cows annually *kill* over twice that many people in the United States alone (Cosgrove, 2023). To add insult to injury, 75% of these attacks have been determined to be *completely intentional* on the part of the homicidal bovine in question (MMWR, 2009).

Now admittedly, this all seems a bit ridiculous; in fact, I'm pretty sure that last sentence is the most ridiculous one I've ever had to write. However, this absurd example does a fantastic job of highlighting how moral panics work. Shark attacks are rare: thus, they're *newsworthy* when they happen. Consequently, the media pays a great deal of outsized attention to these events. Viewers of this excessive coverage, in turn, begin to think that sharks attack more beachgoers than they actually do. The shark becomes a **folk devil**: it has become stigmatized by society, becoming the subject for negative emotions, derogatory comments, and adverse behavior that it doesn't really deserve (Frothingham, 2023). If the panic becomes feverous enough, shark hunts might even be organized and sharks slaughtered *en masse* in an attempt to settle the public's (false and artificially created) sense of terror and mortality anxiety (Hendrix, 2022; Fernicola, 2016).

Now imagine that someone makes a movie about a killer shark rampaging and devouring innocent, scantily clad beachgoers off the coast of Cape Cod. In this movie, the shark is further vilified; in fact, the only way to protect these wholesome, everyday swimmers is to *kill* the villainous shark. The public would be absolutely mortified in response to this film. Tourism dollars would disappear as beachgoers find alternative vacation spots, an entire generation would begin displaying downright *phobic* traits, and the resulting vendetta-like killing and hunting of sharks would reach genocidal levels, crashing their populations and driving entire species to extinction (Baier, 2021; Evans, 2022). Lest we forget, all this panic is due to something that harms fewer than 75 people a year and kills fewer than ten worldwide – cows, again, kill *twice* that many people in America alone. In fact, if one were a cow, it might be quite advantageous to send a few well-trained heifers to stage a false flag operation to implicate all of sharkdom, further distracting and projecting away from ox-kind's homicidal nature.



Figure 3.1 (Westover, J.L., "Mr. Lovenstein", n.d.)

The False Flag

This is a very serious book, and I am a very serious writer.

Returning to our prior discussion, the claim of 800,000 children going missing every

year appears to stem from a May 7, 2013 *ABC News* article that has since been deleted (LaCapria, 2020). A possible reason for its deletion was that it was soundly debunked in a *Washington Post* article written just three days later – an article which explicitly cites the May 7 article as absolute nonsense (Finkelhor, 2013). It appears that the May 7 article was inspired by the discovery of three missing women being found held against their will for almost a decade in Cleveland around that time. There is no established foundation as to how the authors of the May 7 article came to the 800,000 number in the first place. However, it is *remarkably* interesting that it took until nearly August of 2020 for the issue of 800,000 allegedly missing children annually to become of concern to the American public (LaCapria, 2020).

Even more curious is the fact that the same article immediately undermined its own claim: that there are only 115 abductions of a child by a stranger each year. This is the typical abduction scenario that “Stranger Danger” is all about: a child gets taken by a creep in a van who offers them candy. Yet, whereas we were told that 2000 children go missing every day², suddenly we find that only 0.31 go missing per day in this manner that parents and children alike are terrified of by media, police, and politicians.

That certainly sounds like the very definition of moral panic to me.

So where does the real threat lie? If I may borrow a page from the conspiracy theorists’ playbook, one should, of course, always ask what the powers that be are trying to distract us from.

According to the FBI’s National Crime Information Center (NCIC), in 2021 there were 337,195 entries for missing children (NCMEC, 2021), whereas 365,348 reports for missing children were filed in 2020 (Reuters Fact Check, 2021).³ Now again, that doesn’t mean that 365,348 individual children went missing – just that 365,348 reports were filed. This was down remarkably from 421,395 the previous year, 2019, and also represented a decrease from the 2018 number of 424,066. The overall trend here is obvious (see Fig. 3.2), but there’s more here that’s worth noting.

NCIC Reports of Missing Children, 2018-2021

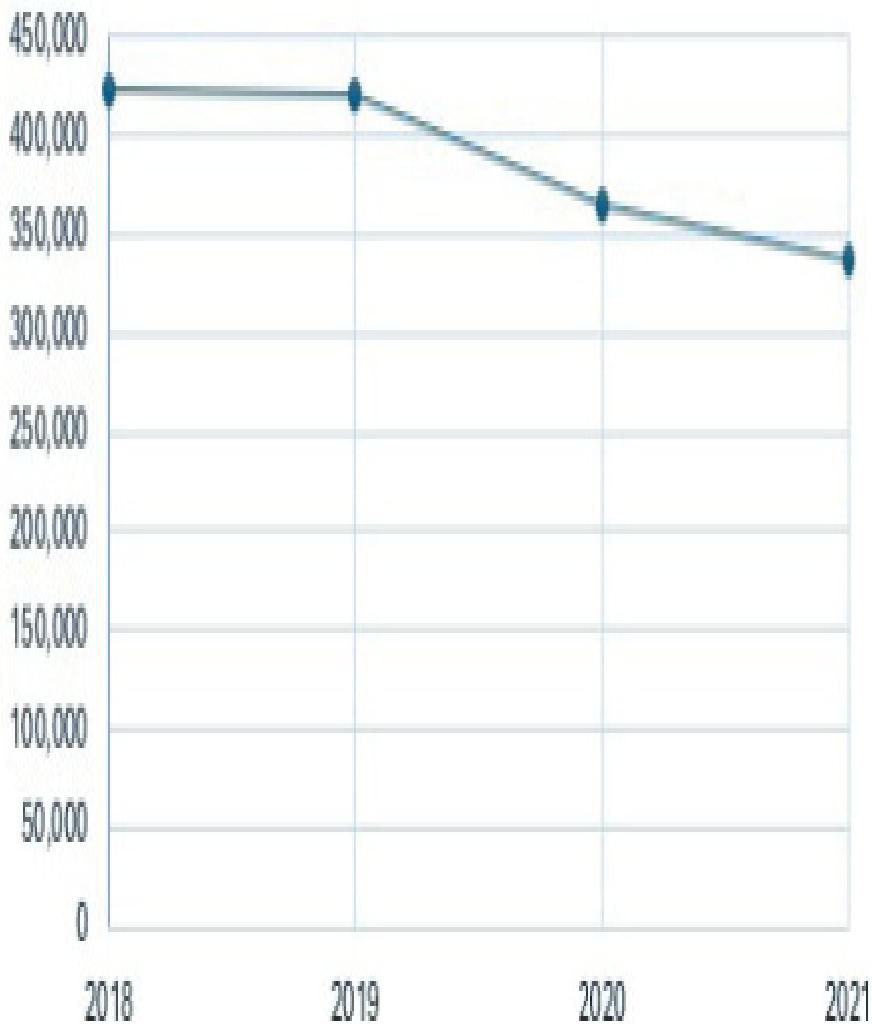


Figure 3.2. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Trends in Missing Children Reports, 2018-2021.*

Recall the 115 child abductions by a stranger every year, the abductions that

everyone is so worried about? They accounted for less than 1% of the cases handled by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in 2019. 91% of cases were endangered runaways, and 4% – more than four times the number of stranger abductions – were abductions by a family member (LaCapria, 2020). This closely mirrors FBI NCIC statistics (Reuters Fact Check, 2021). In short, the threat is always much closer than one believes, often coming from a close friend or a loved one – even a member of one's own family. This may not make for sensationalist media headlines and gripping political theater, but it is what the data reveals to be the fact behind the noise – just as the data reveals that 99% of runaways are located and reunited with their families alive, safe and sound (LaCapria, 2020; Reuters Fact Check, 2021).

Now if I may digress from pure mathematical analysis for a moment to point out a larger trend, this preoccupation with the idea that children run away in large numbers also risks us losing sight of the bigger picture and highlights yet again how wrongly we tend to frame the issue of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST). In turn, the lede gets irreversibly buried. Instead of panicking that one's child is going to run away or go missing for no good reason as these numbers prompt people to do, the question one should be asking instead is, “what exactly are those who run away actually running away from?”

The answer is more often “abuse and trafficking” than it is when answering the question as to what runaways face *after* they run away. Children typically don't flee good, loving, and safe homes, as unpleasant as it may be for parents' delicate egos. In fact, this is one of the most common myths about runaways that was cited in an aforementioned *Washington Post* article (Finkelhor, 2013). Fleeing one's home with no sure place to go isn't a hormonal act of angsty teenage rebellion, but rather a desperate attempt to get away from *something* – typically something that is an overwhelming threat to their safety and welfare. And sometimes, children have very good reasons to flee and not go back to where they came from, as we shall soon see. While this may be unpleasant to acknowledge, it is vitally important that careful and thorough investigations be launched into the homes – and yes, even the *families* – that children run away from so as to determine why they fled in the first place. Such investigations can uncover grotesque abuse and familial trafficking situations, safeguarding the future of these at-risk children – which is what we're all *really* interested in and concerned about, right?⁴

Simplistic and commonplace recovery and reunite operations don't offer these protections to children. Instead, they simply serve to reunite the abuser with the abused. Often, the child will merely run away again (Finkelhor, 2013; LaCapria, 2020), this time much more successfully, and potentially into the arms of someone even more dangerous. Once again, we can see that we're looking at this issue from entirely the wrong perspective, and that what we're doing only further facilitates abuse and trafficking instead of ending it. Moreover, our nearsighted focus on missing children – who are going missing at steadily decreasing rates all while being recovered alive at increasing rates – blinds us to the larger phenomena happening all around us. In 2020, as reports of missing children plummeted, reports of human trafficking, domestic violence, and Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) absolutely *exploded*, largely due to the fact that victims and children were stuck at home with their traffickers due to the Coronavirus Pandemic (UNODC).

None of this is to say that running away from home is unrelated to and/or does not qualify as a risk factor for human trafficking. It absolutely is and does. In the first ever study of its kind, 69% of human trafficking survivors reported having run away at least once during their childhood (Polaris, 2023). However, the relationship is much more complex than children running away from the arms of loving, capable parents into the arms of dangerous predators as it is commonly depicted. A 2014 report issued by the American Psychological Association highlighted how “running away and other behavioral risks may also be effects of sexual victimization rather than contributors to it” (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014, p. 30). Moreover, the focus on statistics about runaway children misses a vital population that must be considered: those children who are abused and trafficked, yet who *don’t* flee.

Returning to the raw, unadulterated arithmetic of the issue: there is a second, equally problematic part to the claim of 100-150,000 commercial sex slaves in America. This is the claim that “one in six runaways are targeted by human traffickers.” This is not so much a false statement as much as it is taken out of context: this number comes from NCMEC which stated that, “Of the nearly 26,300 runaways reported to NCMEC in 2019, 1 in 6 were likely victims of child sex trafficking” (LaCapria, 2020). It is vitally important to note that NCMEC did not state whether these likely child sex trafficking victims became victims of child sex trafficking after they ran away or that they ran away in the first place because they were victims of child sex trafficking. Again, sometimes children have very good reasons for fleeing “home.” However, the popularized version of the “one in six” claim does make the assumption that they were only targeted by traffickers *after* they ran away. Similarly, when we look at the numbers here, we see that the 26,300 runaways reported to NCMEC is less than 3.3% of the claimed 800,000 number examined above.

However, this is the really interesting part: if you erroneously combine these two statistics, one in six (0.167) runaways being targeted by traffickers by the 800,000 children who go missing every year, you miraculously get the 100-150,000 number of “commercial sex slaves in the United States.” Specifically, $0.167 \times 800,000 = 133,333$.

In short, someone who didn’t understand nuance and context did some elementary math and was careless with their statistics, and now we’re dealing with a massive misinformation problem. This is, in fact, a well-documented predicament as well as a common occurrence, with scientists for decades having bemoaned journalists who take one specific finding in a study that applies very narrowly, only to have it reported as a miracle cure for an entire population. Thus, it shouldn’t surprise us to find this in the anti-trafficking world, but it remains nonetheless remarkably counterproductive to efforts to eradicate slavery.

Besides faulty math and people taking very specific numbers relevant to a tiny population and applying them to all human trafficking cases the world over, the problem is further complicated by the hidden nature of human trafficking. This makes the phenomenon incredibly difficult to study, as trafficking is a highly clandestine crime, poorly understood by even the best scholars, and many victims of trafficking simply do not know that they are victims. Additionally, gaining access to the most vulnerable populations to accurately measure their rates of victimization is hard, as they are often fearful of attracting the attention of law enforcement or others whom they perceive as capable of doing them harm. These populations are often among the most marginalized

in society, and as such have reason to be concerned about further victimization from those they perceive to be outsiders of their communities.

Then there are methodological issues in how to measure trafficking. How are victims supposed to report in a self-report questionnaire that they're victims of a crime when they don't know enough about the nature of trafficking to know that they're victims in the first place? How does a researcher even objectively measure something like that in a scientific survey? Self-reports are notoriously problematic in the sciences and prone to individual bias and limitations, while subjects can be deceptive in otherwise time-consuming and costly interviews. Likewise, privacy laws prevent researchers from collecting certain information that would be immensely useful in identifying trends in this area.

Further, cultural deviations in understandings of "choice" and agency muddy the waters even more. Victims may be under the illusion that they are in a trafficking situation by their own agency due to cultural context surrounding notions of free will and choice. Often, foreign victims of labor trafficking will state that they chose to be in such horrid conditions to investigators and first responders. This is a dangerous situation as first responders may not understand the cultural context surrounding these notions and believe that the victims are using an Americanized/Western concept of choice when in fact they are not, thus leading the responders to assume all is well and dismiss claims of trafficking. Only additional, culturally informed questioning can reveal if they have been compelled into servitude through force, fraud, or coercion (Cianciarulo, 2007).

The lesson for the reader up to this point is simple: when it comes to statistics in human trafficking, one must always engage in a little detective work. At the minimum, this means always checking the sources of the statistics and comparing them to the larger picture alongside other, more trustworthy and verified statistics. Never accept a number in this field at face value, and question whether those who claim particular statistics as definitive may be potential charlatans, not professionals.

The impact of fallacious statistics on our understanding and attempts to raise awareness about the issue cannot be overstated. If those dedicated to eradicating human trafficking, a very real and very serious issue, use such flawed data, then there is a very real danger that nothing else they have to say will be taken seriously by the public: it will all be dismissed as fearmongering over a perceived moral panic.

This is a favorite talking point among a particular brand of feminist when it comes to their attempts to legitimize all forms of sex work, especially prostitution. According to these feminists, the epidemic of trafficking is all a hoax of a moral panic created by a vast right-wing conspiracy (Reisenwitz, 2021).⁵ Regrettably, this argument makes a very visible, very large mistake right off the bat: it dismisses the very real lived experiences of many women, especially women of color. This is all the more visible when one realizes that this particular point is made not just by a particular kind of feminist, but almost exclusively *white* feminists in particular. This same mistake can be seen in the last chapter's discussion on calling a spade a spade.⁶

Now don't get me wrong – there is *a lot* in the modern abolitionist movement that is nothing more than pure, concentrated moral panic. We've just examined some of this in detail. But to dismiss the issue outright because some people are very, very bad at math is just as abhorrent as claiming space aliens are responsible for the problem. In some ways that will become apparent very soon, it's actually a far worse offense. Moreover,

and as I have discussed in depth before, we cannot fight what we do not understand, and if we are wasting our time fighting mere illusions of the problem then no victims are getting helped.

This brings us to the issue of the average age of entry into sex trafficking. Many anti-trafficking organizations state that the age of entry into sex trafficking is 12-14 years old (Shared Hope International commits further crimes against mathematics by simply splitting the difference here and calling it 13 years old). Accompanying this claim is that 244,000-300,000 children are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation, in addition to 105,000 children already being commercially sexually exploited.

This claim is, in a word, appalling. Yet, the astute reader is wise to note the overlap between the latter of these claims and the claim of 100-150,000 existing in commercial sexual slavery. Something very fishy is going on with these numbers, to the point that when reporters inquire with organizations as to where they get these numbers, their inquiries are often stonewalled or outright ignored. (Har, 2013) As I mentioned previously, *this is not a very good look for a movement as a whole*. In fact, it kind of makes one wonder if we have any idea what we're doing.

Which, in case it's not yet crystal clear, we don't.

The fact is that these numbers all come from a single study: Estes and Weiner, (2001). Let me state the obvious here first: anyone who knows anything about science knows that a single study does not science make. Science comes about through a consensus of findings. In this instance, there is no consensus: there is only the one lone single study that is uncritically accepted at face value. To make matters worse, another 2006 study (Edwards et al., 2006) took the findings in Estes and Weiner and further extrapolated that 650,000 children were at risk of sex trafficking nationwide.

How did Edwards, et al. (2006) arrive at this terrifying number? The study's authors took a single paragraph describing the sample population in Estes and Warner, (2001) and erroneously applied it as being representative of the entire population of the United States (reference Estes and Warner, 2001, p. 92). The critical error that was made here is identical to the example of 100-150,000 commercial sex slaves in the United States examined earlier: the numbers used to arrive at these alarming statistics regarding child commercial sexual exploitation were applicable *only* to the study's sample population, not the sex trafficked population as a whole (Hall, 2015). Despite this grievous error, Edwards et al., (2006) somehow still managed to pass peer review and get published.⁷ Now the study can be found quoted just as often as Estes and Warner, (2001), despite severe fundamental and assumptive methodological errors.

The conclusion that the average age of entry into sex trafficking is 12 to 14 is easily falsifiable by simply considering the very word "average." One finds the average by taking the sum of the terms divided by the number of the terms: If the average age of entry into sex trafficking were actually 12 to 14, then we'd see far more two- and five-year-olds entering prostitution and being sex trafficked than we actually do. But there's a further problem with the 2001 data, and it has to do with the sample population that the scientists looked at. Estes and Warner were only interested in sex trafficking among minors, so they only sampled those under the age of 18. For the purposes of their study, this made sense: the authors did not make an error in their methodology. Yet the problem naturally arises that by specifically sampling and only counting those under 18, the estimated age of entry is artificially lowered if that age is then later used to represent

the age of entry for all sex trafficking victims, not just those trafficked as minors.

And yet, even this is not the end of this matter. The study in question only examined domestic sex trafficking victims (much more specifically, domestic *minor* sex trafficking victims) not foreign national sex trafficking victims. Later studies and data which took more holistic samples revealed the average age of entry for domestic victims of sex trafficking to be 19 years old (Cunningham & Jacquin, 2018; Polaris, 2019a). This is a remarkably similar finding to those around the world for domestic victims of sex trafficking within their home countries (Lyon, 2014).⁸ Studies examining the average age of entry for the entire population, both domestic and foreign national victims of sex trafficking in the United States, reveal the average age to be 17 years old (Polaris, 2019).

This whole ordeal once again demonstrates the importance of knowing how to properly read a scientific study and not present what applies to a small percentage of the population as representative of the whole, to the point that Dr. Estes of Estes and Warner, (2001) fame even came out and decried the misinterpretation of his study personally, going one step further than I have in stating that the world of the 1990s in which he conducted this research is not the world of today, and thus, *his research is no longer applicable* (Kessler, 2015). Nonetheless, anti-trafficking organizations across the world continue to tout the 12 to 14 number as the age of entry into sex trafficking (as well as the 650,000 figure) – a number that, again, was only really applicable to a small segment of the sex trafficked population in the United States.

In the late 1990s.

One would be forgiven, then, for assuming that the matter is settled: after all, studies have revealed that the average age of entry into sex trafficking, regardless of one's immigration status, in the United States is 17 years old. Unfortunately, like everything else in this field, it's not so cut and dried.

The harsh reality is that we don't even have enough data to try to make an informed estimate about the age of entry into sex trafficking. For one, the problem is simply that massive. Secondly, of what is perhaps the most comprehensive dataset we have on the issue, only 4% of *identified* sex trafficking victims reported their age of entry into sex trafficking, which is hardly a representative sample (Polaris, 2019). The key word here is "identified" sex trafficking victims: this only counts those victims who come forward and identify themselves as victims; so of this whole group, we're missing 96% of the data. To make this point worse, migrants, refugees, and the children of migrants and refugees are also sex trafficked at absolutely abhorrent rates, yet don't report the fact that they're being trafficked (and thus their age of entry into sex trafficking) for many of the same reasons that other vulnerable groups don't do so. Thus, even if we were to have representative samples from those who *do* come forward and identify themselves as victims of sex trafficking, we'd still be missing huge swaths of the affected population that we need to consider for an accurate analysis. This all raises a very important question:

What else are these crucial analyses missing?

It's a very important question. If we're missing *at least* 96% of the data on this relatively simple question alone (and know for a fact that we're missing a whole lot more), what else do we really know about the scope of modern-day slavery? Once again, it's complicated. We know a little about a lot, and a lot about a little bit.

This problem became obvious following the publication of an article titled *The Great*

(Fake) Child-Sex-Trafficking Epidemic in The Atlantic in December of 2021. Countless “experts” on child safety and human trafficking clutched their collective pearls in horror, madly expressing their outrage that anyone could dare question that something was possibly wrong with the modern abolitionist movement. After all, they were just trying to “save the children,” which incidentally had sprung as a hashtag earlier in 2020 thanks to the QAnon movement. The trial of Jeffrey Epstein coincided with the renewed concern about child trafficking, making QAnon’s otherwise rather silly claims about children being sex trafficked aboard the USNS Comfort, a hospital ship then docked in New York City, or in the abandoned tunnels underneath Central Park much more believable to the unwashed masses (Tiffany, 2021). How dare somebody suddenly throw cold water on such outrageous claims? How dare they call it a “moral panic?”

Of course, all of this grandstanding missed a crucial point: while the title of the article might have certainly been dismissive towards trafficking phenomena, it got a lot of the facts right. It showed the math that no one else dared bother to do, pointing out how flimsy most of the statistics were. It pointed out the connection between the Satanic Panic and “Stranger Danger” furor of the 1980s, their intersection with political agendas, religious crusades, and the ways the modern-day abolitionist movement had gone astray by prioritizing conspiracy theories and half-baked numbers over fact. Moreover, it highlighted what is arguably a lot of the corruption in the anti-trafficking “industry,” with donor contributions meant to help children escape from very desperate situations instead being siphoned to fund extravagant lifestyles that for-profit CrossFit gyms run by non-profit organizations just can’t quite cover in full (Tiffany, 2021). Now for those to whom this seems improper, let me assure you that this is, of course, totally not an instance of the layering phase of a money laundering scheme nor is any of this in any way, shape, or form reminiscent of a cult because...

Well, I’m sure *someone* could and probably already has invented a reason, be it a former HSI agent with a shady and questionable past or a disgraced lieutenant general with extensive experience in psychological and information warfare – reasons which I’m also quite sure have nothing to do with shamelessly profiteering even *more* from the problem (Bramescio, 2023; Juzwiak, 2023; Rondeaux, 2021; Moore, 2023; Internal Revenue Service, 2015-2021).

Fortunately, not everyone had their heads buried in the collective sand. Forensic psychologist Dr. Athena Ives took the opportunity to point out that we don’t do a very good job of quantitatively measuring the scope of human trafficking in the world (Ives, 2022). Ives noted that quantitative statistics on the scope of human trafficking are extremely misleading – academic literature reviews routinely misestimate the reality of the situation, as they assume that statistics in peer-reviewed articles and other reliable sources are actually fact-checked (which as we’ve seen, isn’t the case). Ives realized that this problem was not due to social media, as was the chief topic of concern in *The Atlantic* article, but upon moving to Thailand to conduct her doctoral dissertation to examine the issue *qualitatively* as opposed to quantitatively. Because the prevalence of trafficking is hard to estimate quantitatively, Ives argued, much more qualitative work must be done to understand the issue in the wake of *The Atlantic*’s article. Her comments also revealed how a true expert in the field reacts to criticism, as opposed to mere armchair quarterbacks and grifters.

Yet, there’s an even better reason to avoid using quantitative statistics when

discussing the scope of human trafficking, at least where the general public is concerned, and that's the concept of **psychic numbing**. Psychic Numbing occurs when "constant increases in the magnitude of a stimulus typically evoke smaller and smaller changes in response" (Slovic & Vastfjall, 2013, p. 98). Psychic numbing occurs because human beings have only a limited amount of emotional energy to expend at any given time, and this emotional energy can become rapidly drained in situations of catastrophe.⁹

It's important to note that psychic numbing isn't necessarily a bad thing. In disaster situations where rescue workers are faced with horrors they otherwise couldn't imagine or a person is trapped in said disaster, being emotionally numb can help one focus on aiding others or upon one's own continued existence. Simply put, psychic numbing is an adaptive survival mechanism that can sometimes protect human life. However, it can go awry in the modern, developed world, such as when we hear about mass casualty events, countless multitudes perishing in a genocide on the other side of the world, or millions existing in slavery today. Our compassion and emotional reserves tend to max out when we witness or learn of only about two (2) individuals experiencing distress (Slovic & Vastfjall, 2013). Thus, presenting the public with stats about millions upon millions of people – most of whom the typical person will never meet – suffering in slavery isn't exactly a very effective technique to get them to engage on the topic: they'll think, "oh, that's awful," and move on with their day to something that *doesn't* completely drain their emotional capacity as a human being. Once again, we can see that we're approaching this problem from the worst possible angle.

So what do we really know about the scope of human trafficking? How bad is the problem of modern-day slavery – is it as bad as advocates say it is, or were the authors of *The Atlantic* article right: is it all a moral panic about nothing?

Again, quantitatively, it's not at all clear, even at this point. However, we do now know that the missing children epidemic is getting better *as a whole*¹⁰ and we know that the average age of entry into sex trafficking isn't as low as commonly claimed. But that's mostly because we don't even know how to measure the problem. We also know that quantitative statistics are unreliable, yet we also know that *something* really bad is going on whether we can measure it or not. Human trafficking indisputably occurs, but just how widespread is it?

The American Psychological Association offers a frank assessment on this issue: "there is no reliable estimate of the prevalence or incidence of trafficking of women and girls in the United States" (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014, p.2). Moreover, the APA goes further and highlights the notorious shifting estimates that are published in the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report as being "indicative of the difficulty in determining prevalence and incidence," carefully sidestepping the political calculus the State Department puts into publishing the annual TIP report as a weaponized tool of foreign policy (Roster, 2016). These shifting statistics published by the State Department have often been used by critics to argue that human trafficking isn't really that big a problem as well, highlighting the problems encountered when slavery is used as a tool for cheap politicking (see Carney, 2015). The fact that the TIP excluded analysis of the trafficking situation in the United States for the first ten years it existed speaks heavily to this notion, and even to this day the authors of the TIP have clear motivation to understate the extent of the problem in its host nation (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook Heffron, 2018).

Some commonly cited statistics do give further insight, however. These statistics seem to have a common origin: the International Labour Organization (ILO).

A 2014 report by the ILO revealed that forced labor in the private economy was responsible for 21-40 million individuals being kept in slavery, with profits worth approximately \$150 billion based on 2012 data (ILO, 2014). Approximately \$51 billion of this came from forced labor, while \$99 billion came from commercial sexual exploitation. This data was updated in 2017 using 2016 data, where the ILO estimated that the number of individuals living in slavery was closer to 40 million than to the original 21 million figure (ILO and Walk Free Foundation, 2017). Just five years later in 2022, new estimates were published using 2021 data, updating the number from 40 million to 50 million in slavery, and \$150 billion in profit having increased to \$200 billion over a very short period (ILO and Walk Free Foundation, 2022).

There's a lot to take in with this data, so I ask for the reader's patience. Of particular note is the rapid increase from 2017 to 2022 in the number estimated to be enslaved and the profit generated from this enslavement. While some of this increase can be attributed to better detection and improved methodology, such improved methods are hardly responsible for all of the increases. While the rate at which children go missing in the United States is improving, *the overall problem of slavery is getting worse worldwide*, and it's getting worse quickly. After all, a 20% increase over the course of a mere five-year period is nothing to sneeze at. Realizing this, one is immediately reminded of George Orwell's words in 1945: "Looking at the world as a whole, the drift for many decades has been not towards anarchy but towards the reimposition of slavery." (Orwell, 1945).

Implications of totalitarian dystopia set aside for a brief moment, the data from the ILO spawned a series of related, oft-cited statistics that are often used to illustrate the scope of slavery. Chief among these is the shocking statistic that 1 out of every 200 people is a victim of slavery (Hodal, 2019),¹¹ with current statistics revealing human trafficking to be the second most common crime globally, right behind drug and weapons trafficking. Similarly, this means that more people have been identified as existing in slavery today than at the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the numbers keep increasing (Cohen, 2009; Belles, 2015). This data makes sense given what we know about prison labor and the prison population in America: again, there are more Black males under criminal supervision (jail, parole, prison, or probation) than the total number of Black slaves in the United States in 1850 (Childs, 2022).

Here's where the problem with the ILO's data begins to emerge. Just like any dataset, the ILO's estimates are debatable; but the ILO's data is problematic for an especially curious reason. And the last point about prison labor is crucial in understanding the shortcomings of these estimates.

The ILO's estimates are concerned with only two specific forms of trafficking: forced labor and forced marriage (ILO and Walk Free Foundation, 2017). Despite often being presented as representative of the entirety of slavery, these estimates largely don't concern themselves with child marriage, child soldiers, organ trafficking, etc. Thus, we're missing a large chunk of what constitutes human trafficking by default. More to the point, the ILO's definitions of forced labor and forced marriage are faulty at best.

To start with, the ILO's definition of "commercial sexual exploitation" is filed under "forced labor," and is hardly exhaustive. Less than a page of text accompanies the term, and it's barely even defined as a term as it is. Its inclusion seems to be more of an

afterthought than anything else. Then there's the issue of forced labor in prisons: there are *at least* 800,000 forced laborers in state and federal American prisons alone, generating \$11 billion in goods and services annually (Sainato, 2022; ACLU & GHRC, 2022).

This represents a significant increase to the existing estimates that, for some peculiar reason, are never included in human trafficking estimates. For the periods in which the data is applicable (ILO and Walk Free Foundation, 2017), this represents an increase of 4% of those in forced labor (17% if counting only those in state-imposed forced labor) and a nearly 22% increase in the profit margin of forced labor. What is the ILO's explanation for not including this incredibly significant population in their forced labor estimates?

In short, such labor is *legal*, so it doesn't count as forced labor (ILO and Walk Free Foundation, 2017, p. 42). The reader will recall a similar argument being presented in the last chapter which was thoroughly debunked by the author as well as those he was critiquing. Insight into the ILO's half-baked reasoning can be gleaned from the justification they generously provide for their exclusion of prison labor:

On this subject, there has been substantial dialogue between the ILO supervisory bodies and those Member States that have ratified the first forced labour Convention. The supervisory bodies have pointed to the need for convincing indicators that the choice to work is voluntary.

For those who don't speak diplomat, allow me to translate: "it's politically inconvenient for too many of the people we answer to for us to call a spade a spade, and we've been extensively told, in no uncertain terms, not to do so if we want to keep our jobs."

It is here that one is reminded that the ILO is an extension of the UN, which is a political organization. Thus, the political considerations of its member states, including the United States, play heavily into the ILO's ability (or lack thereof) to call the kettle black. This reveals a very common problem with government sponsored anti-trafficking initiatives: everyone wants to claim that they're doing something to address the problem, but *not* to the point that they actually affect the status quo too much. The role of politics in limiting our ability to understand, combat, and so much as label the problem without beating around the bush through political doublespeak deserves a book unto itself.¹²

Now for those readers who think I am being too tough on American corrections here, I encourage them to consider the implications for forced prison labor in China, Myanmar, and North Korea to understand just what a pickle this issue puts us in. In China, the Communist government serves as the trafficker, especially for the persecuted Uyghur minority, which are trafficked through a series of *at least* 1,200 state-run internment and work camps (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021). Between 100,000 and 1 million Uyghurs are subject to forced labor in these detention and "re-education" camps, although the number is estimated to be much higher (Bureau of International Labor Affairs; Unknown). Suddenly, America doesn't look so bad, at least by comparison.¹³ The products of this slave labor have been traced to the global supply chains of *at least* 83 global brands. Of course, these numbers don't include the numerous dissidents and other persecuted persons trafficked through Chinese prisons, who are also frequently executed and summarily harvested for their organs (Guttmann, 2014). By sweeping forced prison labor under the rug because it's politically

inconvenient to deal with, these atrocities – and far more – are likewise kept hidden from sight.

In North Korea, the situation is unbelievably worse. According to the Global Slavery Index operated by the Walk Free Foundation, North Korea had a population of just over 25,243,000 in 2018, with *at least* 2,640,000 of those living in slavery. Given this, North Korea ranks the overall worst in the world when it comes to current estimates of slavery, especially when forced prison labor is factored in. However, defectors of the regime say the situation is even worse than these abysmal estimates: that the entire country exists in a perpetual state of slavery aside from a few elite ruling individuals (Freedom United, 2022). From the examination of the data and the statistics up to this point, it's clear that there is at least some merit to their claims.

Myanmar presents unique insight into the risks that state-sanctioned forced labor poses. In fact, it does more than that, highlighting the risks to the entire globe that a single human trafficking ring can pose if left unchecked. The Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs, the coup and subsequent violence in Myanmar, Russia's hybrid warfare against the West and invasion of Ukraine, and extensive instability across Southeast Asia are all connected to a *single* trafficking network in Shan State, Myanmar (Cohen 2009; see also Reuters, 2024).¹⁴ This particular state-sanctioned slavery ring affects the persecuted Rohingya people in particular, demonstrating the way human trafficking/slavery can be used as an instrument of genocide, as per the Chinese persecution of the Uyghurs and other dissidents (Guttmann, 2014). I make no exaggeration when I claim that slavery is the single greatest threat to the national security of the United States and to the security of the larger free world, based upon all the evidence and data that I have examined. Only the threat of nuclear annihilation comes even remotely close, as slavery both underpins and connects all other threats together – including the nuclear one. After all, who do you think mines the uranium needed for these complex devices?

In this regard, it is worth examining the similarities of the human trafficking methods perpetrated by the Islamic State/Da'esh in their crimes against the Yazidis in Iraq and Syria as well as those of the Taliban in their atrocities in Afghanistan to see how this principle holds (Human Rights Council, 2016; Zarnowski, 2022). Slavery truly is a threat to global security, one which we've yet to fully understand or meet head on. Consider, for instance, the relationship between the drug trade and slave labor: in Afghanistan, enslaved Afghans are forced to toil in the Taliban-controlled poppy fields or in industrial drug labs for what are often inhumane lengths of time. This results in the production of three-fourths of the world's opium and large quantities of amphetamines that infiltrate borders the world over. This directly contributes to the opioid crisis in the United States and the violence of the narcocartels in Mexico and across Latin America (Zarnowski, 2022). Here we can see the value of Dr. Ives' much-suggested qualitative research: it reveals the links that mere numbers obscure.

Yet, there's more that's wrong with the ILO's estimates. Many forms of human trafficking go by different names in different places and are then not traditionally understood as forms of trafficking in certain locales despite clearly meeting the definition. This is not the fault of the ILO, but rather an issue in quantifying things in general. Consider the issue of **wage theft** in the United States, which is but one way that employees may be labor trafficked. Wage theft occurs when an employer steals from an employee, typically through violating minimum working standards.¹⁵ In 2016 alone,

wage theft from American employees totaled at least \$40 billion (Robinson, 2017).

If the reader is paying attention, they will have noticed that I have now more than doubled the ILO's global estimates of the scope of forced labor just by examining two aspects of labor trafficking in one country.

The reader should also notice a pattern by now: I'm using the words "at least" a lot. There's a reason for this: the problem is so bad that we don't even really know how to really measure it. The ILO's estimates represent, at the absolute best, a bare minimum baseline of the problem, with no real clue as to just how bad things actually are. Hence, we can now see why dismissing human trafficking and slavery as some sort of "moral panic" just because *some* members of the modern abolitionist movement absolutely are panicky moral crusaders is even worse than claiming that John Podesta is magically draining children of their adrenaline somewhere. Now recall what we established earlier, and what George Orwell noted all the way back in 1945: *the problem is getting worse*, and even per the ILO's relatively poor, politically hampered estimates of the problem, *it's getting worse fast*.

Surely, I can't be the first to have noticed this pattern since slavery was reframed under the term "trafficking" in the late 1990s. Individual statistics about human trafficking have certainly been impeached frequently. In fact, it's a favorite pastime of some of the better thinkers in the anti-slavery movement on LinkedIn, but to my knowledge the whole gamut has not been examined. And so, we're largely venturing into new territory here simply by saying that we don't know what we think we know. This is a conversation that we very desperately need to have, not only as modern abolitionists but as a society. We haven't advanced nearly as far as we think we have, after all: we're still very much shackled to our old ways of exploiting those beneath us to handle the grunt work.

At the very least, I know that I am not the first to notice the most worrying of trends. Frederick Douglass recognized in 1865 that slavery is a serpent that never really goes away but rather merely changes form. Orwell made his comments about society's trend towards reimposing slavery in 1945 at the advent of the nuclear age. Hannah Arendt added to our understanding of the societal structures of power and control underpinning slavery when she examined the totalitarian systems of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia.¹⁶ However, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. seems to have come the absolute closest to describing the collective societal forces at the root of the problem in his 1967 address on the three evils of society – less than eight months before he was assassinated, no less (King, 1967). So no, not *everyone* has been twiddling their thumbs since the end of the Civil War, but most of us have been.

Including myself.

Douglass, Orwell, Arendt, King – the greats knew something larger and much more terrifying was befalling us, but the rest of us have generally stood back and ignored their warnings. So here we are in 2025, largely having to start from scratch to get a grip on just *how* bad the situation really is. To this end we find ourselves not merely confronting a mathematical garbage pile with our estimates of slavery. Instead, we're dealing with a statistical dumpster fire.

What are we to do with this? Where do we go from here?

While we don't have good insight into the whole of the situation, we do have a foundational basis to build from thanks to the ILO, as well as a modestly good

understanding of the individual components of slavery. This gives us a strategy for compiling new and better statistics and, much more importantly, a better understanding of slavery itself. As Dr. Ives suggested, we need to look at this issue qualitatively, not quantitatively. The best insight into the scope of human trafficking comes from data that so far are only *indirectly* understood to be related to modern-day slavery. Sexual violence, family/domestic violence, and crimes against children all intersect with trafficking – and are thus fundamental to understand. Unfortunately, this makes for an ugly task that forces us to confront the worst of ourselves and our societies and to recognize that monsters are much closer than we might like to think, as we have already seen in our examination of the issue of runaway children.

Furthermore, we know a fair bit about how slave-produced goods enter the supply chain, and this allows us to start revealing additional strands of the web of slavery to see both how deeply it runs and how it connects to nearly everything in our lives, much like a spider's web overlaid across society. For instance, recall how the enslavement of Uyghurs in China has infiltrated the supply chains of no fewer than 83 major global brands. Indeed, this notion of slavery being a tangled web that must be unraveled is a concept that must itself be further unraveled, and thinking in terms of supply chains provides a good way of doing so.

SHARE OF TOTAL GLOBAL PRODUCTION ORIGINATING IN XINJIANG

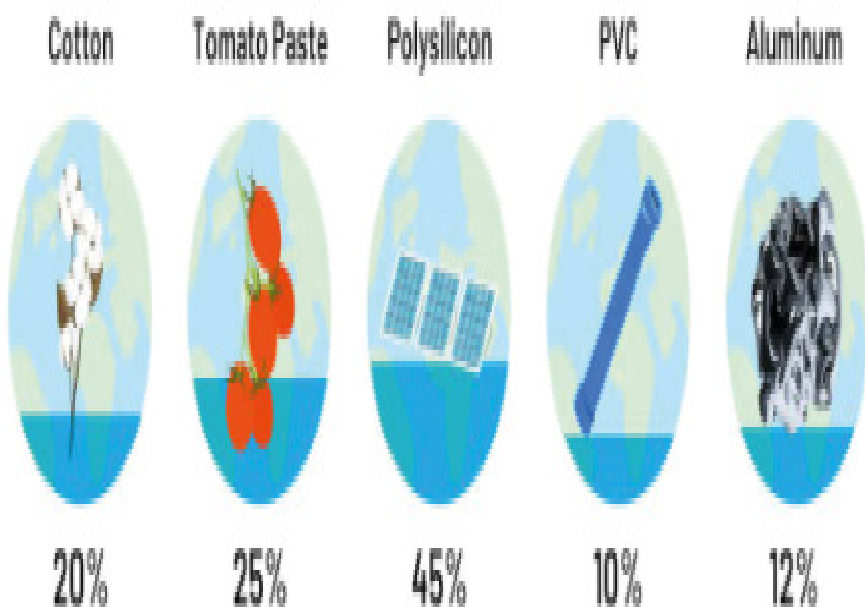


Figure 3.3. (Helena Kennedy Centre, 2023)

Products made with forced labor in China.

Many of the products used in everyday American households were originally made from Uyghur slave labor in China. Polysilicon is frequently used in the production of renewable energy components, revealing that even seemingly noble and worthwhile attempts to save the planet have a very human cost. This will become all the more clear when we discuss the situation in Africa in a later chapter (Felix, 2023; Kara, 2022).

Through the supply chain, we can see the ways in which slavery connects and affects

goods and services, and how we interact with both the enslaved and the enslavers every day. To truly comprehend the scope of what we're facing, this superstructure that envelopes and connects disparate nations, societies, friend and foe, slave and slaver alike must be properly studied if we are to truly confront this problem. To make matters worse, the problem is in more ways like a spider's web than it is not. You see, spiders are really much more clever than we give them credit for, utilizing their webs as literal extensions of their brain to offload cognitive tasks and processes (Sokol, 2017). In layman's terms, spiders become smarter and smarter than their prey with literally each and every strand of their webs that they lay, quite often becoming the ultimate predators in their ecosystem. Consider the implications: they literally catch flies with pieces of their brains.

Now as much as I wish this were simply a lesson in arachnology, this has real-world implications for the subject at hand. With each new connection – with each new thread of web laid – the problem becomes that much more difficult for us to solve. The lesson is clear: while slavery may be a serpent, it also seems to walk on eight legs: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, revealing why attempting to quantify the issue is the wrong approach. By merely looking at *how many* are enslaved, which as previously established is an absolutely impossible number to calculate, we're missing the larger issue that is the true and full unspeakable eldritch horror before us.

Perhaps one of the most comprehensible and comprehensive introductions to the problem of slavery in the supply chains is available courtesy of the Slavery Footprint team. This tool allows the reader to examine their own role in the supply chain and see how slave labor results in the goods and services they consume. Admittedly, a warning is needed: for those unfamiliar with the nature of the problem, this can result in some severe shock. Even for those who are familiar with the sheer scope of slavery in our modern world, it can still hold some surprises. For instance, when the author was poor, jobless, and running anti-trafficking operations out of his parents' basement for no pay, *he had no fewer than thirteen slaves supporting his lifestyle*, which, as just established through the math in this chapter, is likely a severe underestimate of the real number. The Slavery Footprint calculator is recommended for all readers to get some sense of the overall issue, and is available at <https://slaveryfootprint.org>.

Theoretically, of course, there shouldn't be an issue with the supply chain to begin with. Slavery was, hypothetically at least, fully abolished in 1981 when Mauritania made forced labor illegal. Further, developed countries such as the United States have put regulatory safeguards in place to prevent slave-produced goods from entering the supply chain. For instance, the 2009 Customs and Facilitations and Trade Enforcement Act explicitly prohibits the sale of goods made through the use of coercion or by victims of human trafficking. A 2015 update to the law enables Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to investigate any goods reported to be a product of child or forced labor and ban the goods from entry into the United States. Yet, such policies only work if they are enforced, which they largely are not (Data Team, 2018). Moreover, those subject to regulation hardly have stellar reputations for self-policing themselves: despite carefully crafted anti-slavery publicity statements, firms such as Nestle that are known to profit from slave labor are more than happy to pass the buck to the consumer rather than sacrifice even a sliver of their multimillion-dollar profits to address the issue (Baker, 2018).¹⁷

Some aspects of the supply chain are more visibly problematic than others. For instance, a supply chain that consists of goods produced in a single factory in Indiana and shipped to a multitude of stores is easier to trace than an item sold in a multinational corporation's store, having been produced in multiple countries all across the world. It's easy to visit a family farm and check to see how they're treating their farmhands; it's quite another thing altogether to visit factories in China, Siberia, India, and Sierra Leone and get honest estimates of how workers are being treated, making sure the products are being handled at each step in the shipping and building process by workers who are properly compensated and regulated.

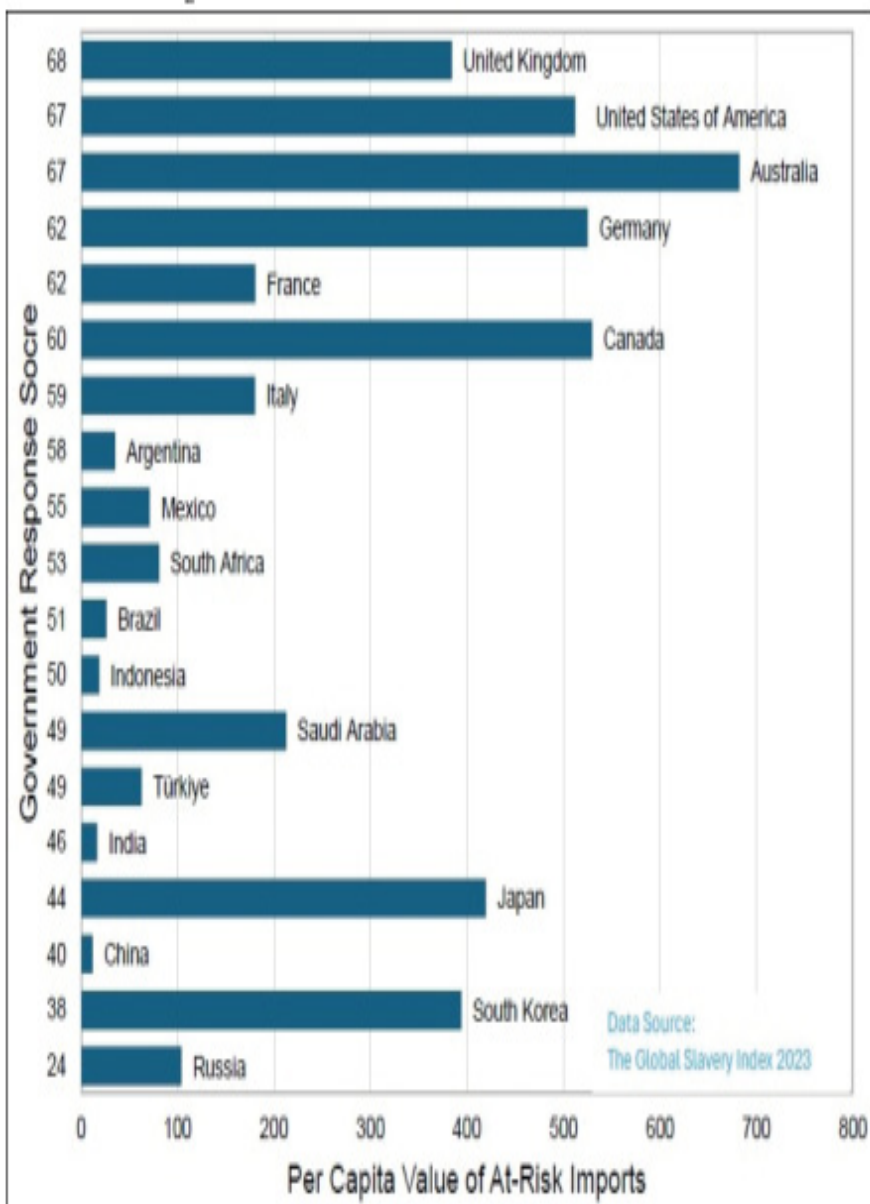


Figure 3.4. Imports of coercively made goods, and response by governments against such importation. More policies against human trafficking and slavery-produced goods don't necessarily equate to better protections, as made clear by the countries near the top of the chart. Policy without enforcement is pointless. Yet, a temporal study would be informative, and is a worthy topic for future research.

To this end let me briefly summarize the issues that are most visible in the supply

chain: do you drink coffee, enjoy chocolate, or sweeten anything with sugar? Those are all goods frequently produced with slave labor – including *child* slave labor. Do you have a smartphone, laptop, or anything with a microchip in it? That’s likely the product of slave labor in China – an “undesirable” was likely worked to death so that you could “like” that tweet. Do you enjoy fresh vegetables or fruits? Such items are frequently harvested by trafficked migrant labor. How about meat? Forced migrant labor is frequently used to raise animals to the slaughter, and the meatpacking industry is well known for further labor trafficking and child labor abuses (Leonard, 2015). How about the clothes you wear? Again, trafficked migrant labor is frequently the source of many of the fabrics we rely on in our daily lives. Do you purchase sex, go to strip clubs, or view pornography? Whether you know it or not, you’re supporting sex trafficking and organized crime. How about the wood that was used to build your house? The forester was likely enslaved, and the wood was likely illegally harvested. Don’t even get me started on the seafood industry.

Product	Source Country	Annual Value (in thousands of US\$)
Electronics	China	\$106,158,032
	Malaysia	\$1,427,054
Garments	China	\$24,889,568
	Vietnam	\$15,288,211
	Bangladesh	\$7,273,296
	India	\$4,657,696
	Malaysia	\$256,474
	Brazil	\$25,173
	Argentina	\$950
Textiles	China	\$4,752,876
Fish	China	\$1,015,843
	Thailand	\$670,363
	Indonesia	\$406,921
	Taiwan	\$144,891
	Ghana	\$257
Timber	Brazil	\$2,107,498
	Russia	\$549,653
	Peru	\$8,361
\$169.6 Billion		
Source: Global Slavery Index 2023		

Figure 3.5. Imports of the top 5 slavery-produced goods to the United States. Remember that these numbers are very conservative estimates; the real numbers are undoubtedly much higher.

If one considers the 2009 law prohibiting the sale of goods made through coercion or

by victims of human trafficking in this context, one can see why it's absolutely unenforceable. Moreover, let's conduct a thought experiment: assume that the Customs and Facilitations and Trade Enforcement Act were to suddenly be enforced on a mass scale.

Grocery store shelves would immediately run empty, people would starve in the streets, and the economy would crash – all because of how dependent on slave labor our society is. Human trafficking underscores everything from national security to forestry and fishery depletion to our kitchenware; thus, such regulations are unenforceable almost by design. As I said previously, everyone wants to look as though they care about the problem, but not to the point that they actually make waves and disrupt the status quo. In this way, slavery underscores society, the economy, politics, and thus, even crime. It explains why “China stole your job” – the reality being that China, of course, didn't actually steal your job. American corporations realized it was much cheaper to relocate to China and exploit literal slaves *there* than to pay you fairly *here*, and most of your problems (as well as a great number of American national security threats) result from this phenomenon.¹⁸

From this we can see that slavery really does affect us all and is our collective problem, as it transcends both politics and the capitalism/communism false dichotomy.¹⁹ Clearly, human trafficking is a vast, interconnected problem, not unlike a spider's web. It's almost indescribable in measure, with statistics unable to even begin to do justice to its true scope. What's so frustrating is that we've not yet begun to understand it; after seemingly having come so far, we're right back at square one.

¹ Galeophobia: the fear of sharks (Evans, 2022).

² This actually comes out to 730,000 a year, not 800,000; as we'll see, math is not these peoples' strong suit.

³ There is a disparity here between the FBI's official number of reported missing children and the number of children the person making the claim suggested went missing, which incidentally is also the number Reuters used. Per the FBI's official data, the number of missing juveniles was 346,237, not 365,348 (NCIC, 2021), a difference of roughly 20,000 missing children. I have no idea where this larger number originated.

⁴ Surely, we're not playing a mere game with children's lives and wellbeing simply to score political points on unrelated issues all while enriching ourselves. That would be simply *insane* if that were the case.

⁵ While Reisenwitz ultimately reaches the wrong conclusion given her ideological advocacy of legalized prostitution (a subject dealt with in a later volume), her analysis and presentation of many of the undisputed facts is nonetheless spotless, and points to much larger trends that need to be addressed. Again, the complicated nature of trafficking, as well as the competing agendas of those addressing it, is visible in these conflicting analyses.

⁶ See Harrison, 2018 and Jenkins, 2022 in comparison to other citations in the previous chapter and note the telltale pattern that emerges. This finding perfectly correlates with the author's experience in who finds the term “modern slavery” to be insensitive or even “offensive” in the modern abolitionist movement. See Feinstein, 2018 and Jones-Rogers, 2020 and for additional insight into these dynamics.

⁷ This may be a good time for the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* to review the 2006 article and issue a retraction.

⁸ One might point out upon review that I am equating sex trafficking with prostitution. Prostitution and sex trafficking are not the same thing, despite sharing very significant overlap. Thus, I ask the reader's patience as this will be addressed in a future volume. For this analysis, assume that I am using the definition of sex trafficking that is outlined in the TVPA, which legalistically defines prostitution as equivalent to sex trafficking.

⁹ See (Haidt, 2013) for how this affects the *moral* emotions and leads to compassion fatigue, outrage fatigue, why our morals fail us, and a whole lot more.

¹⁰ This is incredibly important to understand for the next chapters: just because it's improving as a *whole* doesn't mean there aren't serious problems remaining or that it's not getting worse for certain populations.

¹¹ Curiously, this claim and the others in this paragraph were circulating before even the first of the ILO's reports in 2014 (see Cohen, 2009; Belles, 2015). I cannot explain this as no citation is offered for these earlier statistics.

¹² Again, I find myself frustrated by the fact that I can only write so fast.

¹³ Don't get me wrong, it's still bad. When your defense is, "hey, at least it's not Communist China!" there's a definite problem.

¹⁴ This info was largely made public by (Cohen, 2009) and is further easily deducible by literally anyone who has followed global security developments in the subsequent years. Moreover, if I recall correctly, the Company even played a role in helping make this information publicly available.

¹⁵ This phenomenon will be discussed more in-depth in the section on labor trafficking.

¹⁶ Both of Arendt's books *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* are recommended reading for the serious researcher in understanding the social, cultural, and political dynamics that drive modern slavery. Both works were critical to the formulation of this work.

¹⁷ The headline in *The Sydney Morning Herald* literally reads, "Nestle says slavery reporting requirements could cost customers." (Baker, 2018).

¹⁸ American capitalism, exported abroad via unchecked neoliberal and neoconservative policies, created the Communist monster that is modern China. And China is hardly the only totalitarian nightmare that the cult of Adam Smith has spawned in the modern era, and the implications for trafficking in persons across the globe should be obvious to the reader. There is a lesson to be learned here that is of particular importance to those concerned with both the continued security of American interests as well as the advancement of democracy across the world (Herlihy & Laco, 2023; Alper & Freifeld, 2023; Bertrand, 2023; Corbett & Singer, 2023; Euromaidan, 2022; Mykytiuk, 2022; Youssef, 2023).

¹⁹ Capitalism and communism are highly codependent upon each other and have been throughout history (Sutton, 2012). Communism is widely accepted to have killed approximately 100 million people over the span of the 20th century (100 years) whereas capitalism was recently found to have killed 140+ million over a span of 40 years in the 19th century (Sullivan & Hickel, 2023). Communists and those on the left have a remarkable tendency to point to this as evidence of the superiority of their preferred system, completely missing the point that both are absolute atrocities and abject failures of policy of the worst kind. See also Dutkiewicz, 2022, Bevins, 2021.

Chapter 4

Vulnerabilities and the Problem of Narrative

“When I criticize a system, they think that I criticize them – and that is of course because they fully accept the system and identify themselves with it.”

– Fr. Thomas Merton

“The propagandist’s purpose is to make one set of people forget that certain other sets of people are human.”

– Aldous Huxley

From our examination of the supply chain, one thing has become clear: the entire global economy is now based upon goods and services produced through human trafficking and slave labor. So, while we’ve established a mechanism for getting a handle on the sheer scope of the problem and understanding how deep the web runs (as well as our own unique place in it), we still don’t have any idea of what to do about the mess we find ourselves in. For this, we must examine the economics of the situation and the varying push-pull factors that drive human trafficking in our modern world.

Slavery can ultimately be reduced to a simple economic equation of supply and demand (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook Heffron, 2018). For instance, many societies have a *demand* for cheap, unskilled labor to fill a number of jobs that most members of society deem too menial, hazardous, or demeaning to take. At the same time, labor laws typically require that citizen laborers be paid more than these jobs are worth to employers. This leads employers to look for a *supply* of cheap laborers that can be put to work to fulfill the demand. The basic principle works the same whether one is needing to fulfill a demand for cheap labor, sex, organs, soldiers, etc.: if there were no demand, slavery and trafficking simply would not exist. In this way, one can see that demand *creates* a supply of trafficked persons.

Aaron Cohen made this case abundantly clear when describing his rather heroic career rescuing slaves from their traffickers in his 2009 book, *Slave Hunter*: “As long as there is a demand for the services trafficking provides, there will be trafficking” (Cohen, 2009). Thus, for many years the conventional wisdom has been that in order to aid those who are enslaved, one must address the factors creating demand. Without demand, the argument goes, trafficking will cease to exist, as per the basic economic calculus stated above.

In the anti-trafficking movement, this is known as **demand reduction**, and one

cannot go for very long without hearing about this or that organization's latest task force's "success" at reducing demand. Some sources argue that demand reduction is merely a stopgap measure to address the larger issue, being deployed while organizations and infrastructure are developed to house, treat, and better assist survivors of trafficking (Wolf-Branigin, Garza, & Smith, 2010). This is an interesting argument, arguably one of the more informed ones, as it considers the fact that not all demand can be eliminated as well as the fact that we're falling short of truly aiding survivors by meeting them where they are instead of where we tell them to be (Polaris, 2023). Reverse prostitution stings are an often-deployed form of demand reduction, one that police forces frequently use to disrupt sex trafficking and arrest "johns" (McGough, 2014).

There are problems with this approach, however. For one, we see the omnipresent conflation of prostitution with sex trafficking in this approach. Again, while the two are related, they remain separate, distinct phenomena, as will be discussed later. Moreover, law enforcement's ability to run such operations are limited: they can't run john stings 24/7; they have to respond to a thousand other issues and violations of the law, not just one particular form of slavery. Finally, while demand reduction programs have been applauded, there's really no real way to define "success" in reducing demand. As we saw in the last chapter, we can't even specify how big the problem is, so how can we tell if we're taking a bite out of it? X minus one is one less than X , *but we still don't know what X is*. Is X fifty or infinity? The answer tells us whether we're having an effect on the overall problem or if we're just chasing wild geese: is the number now 49, or is it still infinity?

Consider the typical john sting, which politicians and the media inevitably refer to as a "human trafficking sting": let's say 161 johns are arrested (see Digital Staff, 2021). Great. Now, let's ignore that 158 of those arrests were for mere solicitation of prostitution – a mere three were for solicitation of a minor, which is actual, honest-to-God sex trafficking since minors can't consent to sex. So, now we have a total of three scumbags arrested out of... how many? 161? A little bit of quick math and we can tell that 1.9% of the arrests in the operation were for human trafficking-related offenses, which isn't a very efficient method considering all the officers, agencies, and taxpayer dollars involved in the operation.¹

How much demand for commercial sex was there before the arrests? And of this demand for commercial sex, how much of it was provided for on the supply side by trafficked individuals?

Now, how about after the arrests? How much has demand dropped, if any? Are the bad guys still purchasing sex? How much of this sex is being provided by sex trafficked individuals and how much by consenting adult sex workers?

Just as importantly, how was any of this measured? What methodology was utilized? Who reviewed the results? Could location and the timeframe of the operation cause a sampling bias? Had anybody involved in any of this ever heard of the term "sampling bias" or what it even means? Moreover, how was "demand" operationally defined?

Of course, this answer is simple: *nobody knows*. Perhaps more importantly, nobody really seems to care. But hey, let's not allow such details to get in the way of us celebrating the "largest ever prostitution *anti-human trafficking* sting" put together by over 90 law enforcement agencies and social service partners in the state! I mean, this certainly won't hurt the state Attorney General's chances heading into an election year,

either (and for the record, it didn't). Lest we forget, all of this was done... to catch a whopping three honest-to-goodness sex offenders, none of whom will be in jail for long, if at all (Digital Staff, 2021).²

While such programs have (somehow) been largely judged a good success by those tasked with evaluating them and are noted as a chief form of primary prevention (defined as prevention that stops negative events before they occur; Shively, Kliorys, and Wheeler, 2012), the overall levels of demand for commercial sex have, unsurprisingly, not dropped (Zarnowski, 2022). In fact, as we saw in the last chapter, the problem is getting worse, not better. This is quite possibly because we're not doing all that great a job of targeting the demand side, and as I've said before, we can't arrest our way out of this problem (see Bouché & Tipton, 2024). To this point, Siddharth Kara noted that the demand part of the equation is "highly vulnerable to disruption," citing two particular aspects to be targeted: one, the demand for maximum profit on the part of those exploiting slaves, and two, consumer demand for lower retail prices of slave-produced goods (Kara, 2011, p 70). Common demand reduction techniques employed by modern abolitionists and law enforcement address... well, neither. In fact, such tactics are largely outside the realm of law enforcement, being a matter of national economic policy more than anything else.

Nonetheless, there still is much that can be done in the name of demand reduction that doesn't rely upon economic solutions that are politically unviable at this point in time.³ Thomas Reuland emphasized the power that branding has on corporations, and how corporations use their "brand" to prevent consumers from recognizing the link between a product and the human rights abuses committed to produce that product (Reuland, 2010). Convincingly, he argued that increased efforts to link corporations and their products to slave labor would have an incredible effect on demand, to the point that they might impact United States law. It is surprising that such measures have not been adopted – until one realizes the amount corporations invest not just in PR about doing nothing "anti-slavery" policies they've implemented but also in the anti-trafficking movement itself, paying the very people who should be implementing Reuland's ideas to look elsewhere for solutions instead of holding them accountable.

Kara also noted something that is rarely, if ever, mentioned in the discourse of demand reduction, that gives better insight into why these efforts are not delivering their promised results: *we have to address the supply-side of the equation, too* (Kara, 2011, p. 69). Here, Kara highlights the forces that produce a steady supply of potential human trafficking victims: poverty, societal instability, disaster and wars, corruption, and bias/discrimination against women and minorities. These are better known as **push and pull factors**, and they're part of the larger picture when considering supply and demand.

Push and pull factors largely relate to patterns of migration: push factors cause people to want to leave their current location, while a pull factor explains while a person might want to settle in a new one. For example, consider that you just lost your job: that might be a push factor if you're not very happy in your hometown. If you were to get a new job offer in a new city, that would be a pull factor. It really can be this simple, especially when it comes to human trafficking (a fraudulent job offer is a very common entry point to trafficking scenarios; Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative; 2021) and traffickers utilize these factors to take advantage of potential victims (Chuang, 2006). Yet when we think of vulnerable populations we tend to think in terms of vastly

different scales of push/pull factors.

For instance, war, violence, genocide, persecution, man-made and natural disasters, poor or otherwise limited employment or educational opportunities can all constitute *push* factors. On the flip side, safety and security, freedom from persecution, improved quality of life, and plentiful educational and employment opportunities constitute *pull* factors for a number of populations (National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 2014). By understanding these push and pull factors, we can better understand slavery and the reasons why people might accept dangerous labor assignments, including those in sex work. This of course requires examining the broader socioeconomic conditions and factors that drive slavery and human trafficking, which tend to be overlooked by the traditional prosecutorial response favored to date (Chuang, 2006). Chuang argues for a longer-term approach focused not on short-term arrests but rather on the enshrining of social, economic, and cultural rights – the denial of which has long sustained slavery into the new millennium.

This has led to a revitalization in recent years within the abolitionist movement to look at the supply side of the equation in more depth. This was perhaps best articulated by Christian minister Raleigh Sadler in his 2019 book, *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking*. The premise of Sadler's argument is that while it's important for the everyday person to understand their role in trafficking phenomena (such as through the consumption of goods produced by slave labor), it's *more* important that such people can help prevent and fight trafficking by recognizing **vulnerability**, and focusing their efforts on those who are the most vulnerable.

Now I feel that I need to clarify one point, and that is that while we are both ordained ministers, Sadler and I come from vastly different worlds, and there is a great deal to his approach that I disagree with. For instance, he seems to take the conflation of prostitution with sex trafficking even further than do many in the modern abolitionist movement, arguing that strippers and other sex workers are in need of some form of paternalistic salvation that the Church and the Church alone can proffer.⁴ Nonetheless, his central thesis is incredibly important regardless of its contextual framing. (His book is recommended reading for understanding this chapter.) Further, he and I agree on one crucial point:

People need to get off their knees, stop praying, and actually *do* something to help improve the situation (Sadler, 2019). We can't keep on waiting for Heaven to save us – no one's coming. In fact, we'll see later how our insistence on the idea that someone is coming to rescue us from our own problems is how this problem got so bad in the first place. Instead, we must step up, embrace our roles as agents of the Divine, and take our destinies into our own hands.

Much more to the point, Sadler is really getting to something absolutely extraordinary about the supply side of trafficking that Kara hinted at earlier. There are a host of forces that render people into *potential* human trafficking victims for traffickers to exploit. Thus, the question is begged: what renders a person *vulnerable* to the schemes of traffickers in the first place?

To some degree, we've broached this issue by examining push/pull factors and by looking at the question more broadly than as just a simple matter of arresting the bad guys and heroically helping the victims. However, we haven't yet really delved into this issue. The focus on vulnerabilities that predispose one to human trafficking and slavery

is a very recent and valuable development. The implications for disrupting trafficking were noted in a research paper in 2018 by Polaris, and the true significance of these vulnerabilities, especially for how survivors of trafficking struggle long after they exit their trafficking situation, was highlighted by the organization in just 2023 (Polaris, 2018; Polaris, 2023). This key insight was first identified as being important to the larger picture by noted scholar Kevin Bales in his first edition of *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* in 2000. It was largely ignored by everyone, including the United Nations (even after publishing a memo about the importance of vulnerability in trafficking phenomenon in 2008) when it was very politely brought to their attention by scholars Wheaton, Schauer, and Galli, 2010, after which Sadler largely figured out the problem on his own once again and published his work in 2019.

Hence the “rediscovery” of the importance of vulnerabilities to human trafficking.⁵ Clearly, this issue merits further examination, seeing as it went almost completely undiscussed in the literature on the topic for at least 19 years. Following the publication of Polaris’ research on survivors’ vulnerabilities and their longstanding suffering after escaping slavery in 2023, President and CEO of Allies Against Slavery John Nehme further reasoned out the importance of understanding vulnerabilities to trafficking. Highlighting how the neo-abolitionist movement simply loves to talk about disrupting demand, Nehme pointed out, the vast majority of conversations leave out the crippling poverty that leads one to becoming extremely vulnerable to trafficking (Nehme, 2023). The thing that drives demand is the same thing that drives supply: *money*. So why don’t we talk about this?

The answer is simple, Nehme argued:

It’s easier to focus on the economics of “ending demand” because it means we get to seize assets and take down bad guys. It’s much harder to focus on the economics of “ending supply” because it means we have to create assets and empower victims. Here’s the thing: One approach makes us the well-resourced hero, while the other makes victims and survivors the well-resourced hero.⁶

This answer highlights many of the ways we need to reframe our discussion about slavery and the narratives within the anti-slavery movement. Of particular concern are the hero complexes omnipresent in much of the existing organizations and ways human trafficking is presented: everyone wants to be the ex-CIA or ex-SOF soldier kicking in the door and heroically rescuing sexually abused children or downtrodden women – women who, as the fantasy goes, might want to *reward* you for rescuing them.⁷ If they can’t be the person doing the heroic rescuing, these folks reason, they can at least throw money at the organizations that do such work – or at least, that *claim* to do such work. In psychology, this is called **basking in reflected glory**, or BIRGing for short (American Psychological Association, 2023). Much to this point, many organizations make good money off this narrative and sharply-polished image, all while managing to make the problem on the ground worse than it was when they arrived – such as by having “operatives” have sex with human trafficking victims in the name of “blending in” and “maintaining cover,” *increasing* demand and causing more victims to be exploited (Merlan, 2021).

Contrarily, there’s no glory in hurrying up and waiting, nor in complaining about stovepipes while you wait in line at the mess hall like real SOF operators and CIA

officers do. The same goes with empowering victims and survivors. I want the reader to seriously stop and think about this for a minute: would you rather be Suze Orman, or would you rather be James Bond?

The reality of empowering survivors is, in fact, even less exalting: Suze Orman never had to write an entire grant application by herself for \$12 an hour, nor did she have to walk someone who can neither read nor write through a lengthy housing application. The point is this: everyone wants to be the well-resourced hero, but no one wants to put the time and energy into *creating* well-resourced heroes, exactly as Nehme reasoned. Ending the demand is hailed as necessary, heroic even, but we clearly aren't making the progress we need to there.

So instead of running in circles trying to reduce demand, let's look at the other side of the equation, exactly as Sadler (and Kara) suggested: let's cut the damned supply lines.

There is something intrinsically easy to understand about this notion that is likely to please many of my colleagues. If you're fighting a war, the quickest way to score a win on the battlefield with a minimum number of losses is to cut your opponent's supply lines. Starving soldiers don't put up much of a fight, and they also tend to surrender much more readily than those who are in good spirits. Likewise, if you're dealing with a vulnerable position of your own, you'd reinforce that position: you'd *harden* it. After all, in the immortal words of Benjamin Franklin, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. These principles can be seen in play in various aspects of the attempts to police drugs and prevent narcotics from reaching those who desire them. Law enforcement launches interdictions to disrupt the supply of drugs to their destinations, and they harden airports and other ports-of-entry to make transporting narcotics through them more difficult, as they know they're going to be targeted by organized crime as part of their smuggling routes.

Now I'm in no way advocating we use even more failed "war on drugs" policies to address human trafficking, as that's also a major factor in how we got to this point. But there is a lesson to be learned here, and it is one of framing our approach to the problem. Moreover, it reveals why the issue of vulnerabilities that predispose one to human trafficking are so important for us to address, as well as why it's taken us so long to realize this important piece of the puzzle (besides the obvious cluelessness and wild goose chases that have been documented to date).

Thus, the problem can be seen as one of *narrative*. Narratives are everywhere whether one realizes it or not, and they affect all sorts of issues. Cultures, groups, and individuals each create their own narratives, and we are all subject to them in different ways. Cultural narratives define societies and are informed by their values. We are taught these narratives from birth by our parents, elders, religious leaders, and teachers. They are reinforced by the messages one is inundated with through simply living and growing up in a particular culture. Such cultural narratives help us to understand where we belong in society and how we relate to others. It is important to note that these narratives are incredibly difficult to challenge as they go to the core of what societies believe about themselves. Likewise, these narratives are not necessarily factual in nature, but rather influenced by the dominant beliefs and norms of the social group that construct the narrative, with all the biases, groupthink, traumas, history, and blind spots of that group built into this overarching narrative of how society operates.

Individuals also create and live according to their own narrative. This is, simply put, how one perceives one's own life story, experiences, motivations, and purpose in life. Of course, here problems become more evident than they do with the larger, overwhelming cultural narratives one is subject to. Whereas cultural narratives are informed by the collective self-experience of a group, individual narratives are much more subjective – people are more able to disagree with each other over each other's narrative. Similarly, the ego becomes much more visible at this level: everyone is the hero of his or her own journey, while no one sees themselves as being the villain.

Humans, of course, are social creatures, and they interact and discuss problems affecting them. Through these interactions they form opinions about these problems and organize themselves into groups centered around these opinions – sometimes opposing groups with conflicting opinions – because of these problems. Through this debate, a predominant narrative forms over the issue in question, including what the debate is really about in the first place. Certain narratives become more accepted than others, and these become the focus of discussion when it comes to the topic.

These narratives, much as the narratives previously discussed, may not – and often *are* not – entirely factual in nature. They are influenced by emotion, bias, individual differences, ingroup-outgroup dynamics, competing agendas, and power imbalances among those creating the narrative. These narratives may become stuck over time when the same argument or conversation keeps being raised over and over again with no solution being proposed even when everyone agrees that a solution is necessary. Much more importantly, these kinds of cultural and individual narratives are not even consciously created or recognized: we live out the narratives through which we understand our experienced reality without so much as recognizing that we are doing so. Narratives, much like implicit bias, are like a lens we use to understand our lives and our world: to give linear meaning and cohesion to different and sometimes unrelated experiences. They're like neat little stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves, societies, the universe, and the problems affecting us and the world around us.

To the point under examination, there is a predominant narrative surrounding the issue of human trafficking, and it goes something like this: perfectly evil traffickers abuse and exploit perfectly innocent victims who are perfectly unable to help themselves escape their captors and thus must be rescued by perfectly good, heroic rescuers.

Setting aside for a moment the many glaring problems with such a narrative (such as notions of individual agency and the many nuances of motivation human beings can experience), there is one overriding problem with this narrative: it is that this has been the predominant narrative of the anti-trafficking movement for well over twenty years. Yet, ridiculously little progress has been made in the fight against the modern slave trade. In fact, as we saw in the last chapter, the problem is getting *worse*, not better.

What gives?

To understand this it is important to consider that narratives can also be shifted and manipulated to serve a specific agenda. This is particularly visible during times of war when the discussion about what the various parties are fighting about shifts away from the reality on the ground and the actual causal factors of the dispute. Factional propaganda kicks in and dominates the narrative of each side in what is known as **narrative warfare**, perhaps best summed up by the saying that “truth is the first casualty.” To this end, whichever side manages to control the narrative and the flow of

information tends to control the war.

Such examples of narrative warfare are as abundant as narratives themselves. A great many topics of popular concern have been first brought to public attention and then subsequently shaped through a mixture of massive but discreet covert influence operations, combined with vast corruption, to ultimately create what the public believes to become the accepted “truth” about that issue (see Andersen, 2021 for a fascinating and relevant example). The issues underlying the modern slave trade are no different. Of course, this is not to say that all influence operations are malicious in nature. Public health campaigns are a form of white propaganda to influence behavior just as an ASPCA ad is designed to make the viewer want to adopt a sad, abused puppy. Sarah McLaughlin isn’t evil, but she absolutely *does* want to influence you, and quite overtly, too.

Nor is this to say that all psychological operations are the product of careful forethought as much as they are the result of a long, boring meeting where the participants simply dream up the wildest plot imaginable to test and see if their higher-ups are actually paying attention or if they’ll just rubber stamp it. The CIA’s plan to airdrop extra-large condoms intentionally mislabeled “medium” over the Soviet Union to “demoralize the male fighting population” serves as one prominent example of this, as does the time the Agency staged a series of manananggal attacks in the Philippines to dissuade villagers from joining a communist rebel group.⁸ The point that I am trying to make – besides the fact that those who serve as our nation’s first line of defense are a bunch of silly geese – is this: there is precious little difference between “marketing” and “psychological warfare.” Once one understands this fact the question then becomes, “*what are we being sold? And by whom, for what purpose?*”

Thus, the question is clearly begged: is the predominant narrative of the modern abolitionist movement right? Is it factual? Is it even all that *useful*, particularly and especially to the victims that we are so concerned about helping?

If not, then why are we still using it to attempt to understand the problem? What purpose does it serve? Why have we not discarded it yet? Who, if *anyone*, really benefits from this narrative sticking around if not the victims of this heinous act we are trying to stamp out, and what does this say about ourselves, our societies, and our place in those societies?

Perhaps most importantly of all, what is this faulty narrative keeping us from seeing as to how to actually address this problem that we all agree needs to go away?

The question may be more pertinent than one might think. Traditionally, countries and societies have thought of their role in human trafficking as either source countries, transit countries, or destination countries. To understand these terms, let’s look at the flow of migrants from Guatemala to the United States. Guatemala is the *source* country – it’s the country from which the migrants originate, and where there are many push factors affecting migrants’ desire to head north. Poverty, frequent natural disasters, high crime, poor educational and job opportunities, a barely resolved, long-lasting civil war coupled with an all-out genocide or two⁹ are among some of these push factors present in the country. Their *destination* country is the United States, which has an ample supply of pull factors: plentiful resources, jobs, educational opportunities, low crime, and few natural disasters coupled with no ongoing civil war or genocide. However, to arrive in the United States, migrants from Guatemala must first pass through Mexico, a *transit*

country. They don't intend to stay in Mexico, they're just passing through. From this example we can understand source, transit, and destination countries. These terms are particularly useful for mapping international human trafficking – trafficking *between* nations – as they pertain to patterns of migration, which are influenced by a variety of push/pull factors (Mordeson & Mathew, 2017). Yet, there's a problem that this sort of terminology and analysis almost always misses: what about *intranational* trafficking – that is, the trafficking of persons within their own country of origin?

This is a critical point, as the majority of human trafficking never crosses international borders. Approximately 71% of all victims of slavery are trafficked within their country of origin, with 77% of victims in the United States alone being citizens or lawful permanent citizens of the country (Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021; Polaris, 2018).¹⁰ Thus, by limiting our discussion to source, transit, and destination countries, we're overlooking *at least* 71% of the problem globally, and 77% of the problem stateside. (See Figure 4.1). Throughout most of the literature in which source, transit, and destination countries are discussed, trafficking *within* countries is tossed by the wayside, almost as if it is a side story to the larger international picture. While the transnational picture is beyond a doubt important to understand, we're clearly missing a large portion – the main portion – of what's going on with the dynamics of slavery by focusing on what's occurring between regions and countries instead of what's occurring within them. By looking at the macrocosm, we're missing what goes on in the microcosm.

There is justification for this shortsightedness, and that is the role of globalization. As the world became more interconnected at the close of the 20th century, neoliberal policies allowed for competition between faraway locations in an unregulated free market. Indeed, that's the very definition of neoliberalism, and neoliberalism and globalization go hand in hand with one another (Peksen, Blanton & Blanton, 2017; Uddin, 2020).¹¹ In a globalized economy, the market forces that drive the slave trade are stronger than ever – with consumers seeking lower and lower prices and businesses seeking to cut costs by any means necessary (Kara, 2011). Businesses no longer compete with the guy next door, but rather with businesses that may be a continent (or more) away. The end result is that while markets are free and unrestricted, human beings are not – in fact, individual, personal human freedom and individual security have taken a nosedive in favor of the global liberation of markets following the end of the Cold War (Peksen, Blanton & Blanton, 2017; Kara, 2011; Uddin, 2020).

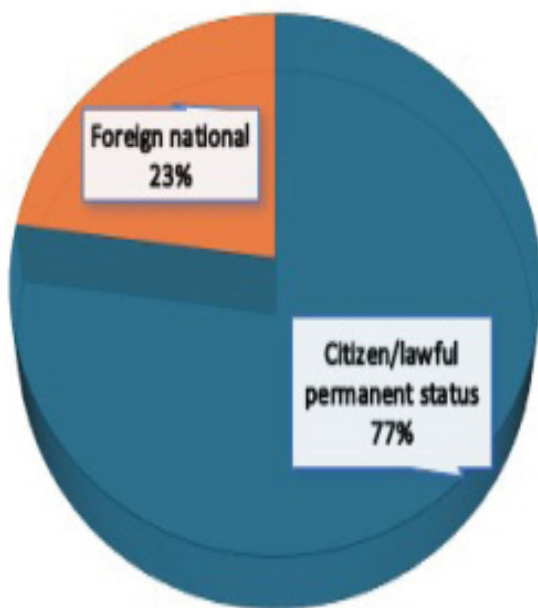
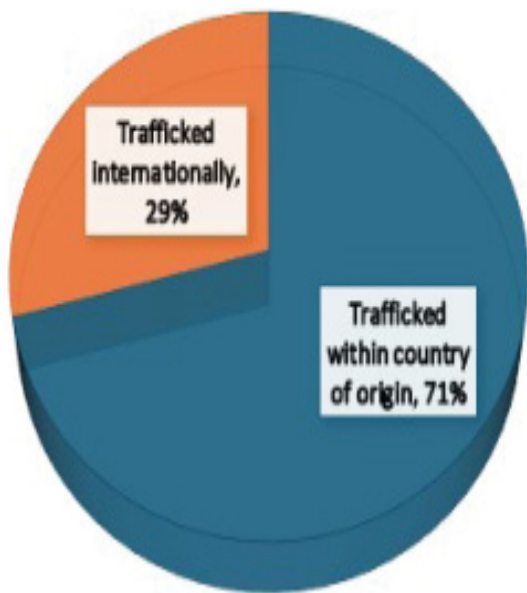


Figure 4.1. (Zarnowski, 2023)

Trafficked populations globally (top) and within the United States (bottom).

(Data from Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021 and Polaris, 2018.)

Yet markets are complicated. Just as there are international markets, there are

domestic markets: hence the problem of considering countries merely in terms of source, transit, and destination as it pertains to international trafficking alone. Continuing from our analogy of the drug trade, we can reframe these terms as dealer, mule, and addict countries. Yet, does this advance our understanding at all? Or are these just new terms to describe the same old phenomenon that doesn't take into account the role of intranational trafficking?

To make sense of this we need to realize that most countries – in fact, almost *all* countries – are really addicted dealers who get high on their own supply, and this is the crucial aspect where vulnerabilities come into play. All societies come up with mechanisms to keep a certain portion of their population vulnerable so that they can then fill their own demand through intrinsic bias, cultural norms, and societal taboos – and then trade and exchange the surplus with other dealers in a globalized market. Addressing these underlying mechanisms is key to preventing people from being trafficked – potential trafficking victims must be thought of as vulnerable targets, and it's our job to harden them so that they are less vulnerable to the myriad ways that societies try to commoditize them.

Thus, from our analogy with the drug supply we can see that what needs to occur is nothing short of a global intervention: we need to drastically attack the supply, confiscating the addict's stash, so that we can in turn force them to go through what is admittedly a torturous withdrawal so that they can finally function in a healthy way.

Now, this point about withdrawal is more than just the author being clever with analogies here. As we saw through the examination of the supply chain, modern societies are well and truly addicted to slavery and the goods it produces. Thus, if we're truly serious about abolishing slavery – and from what I've seen, that's a very big *if* – then we need to be completely honest with ourselves: this is going to get quite unpleasant for all of us. In fact, this is probably going to really suck. We are, after all, talking about advancing society past a barrier that it's been crippled by since the time humans first invented agriculture. Moreover, we're talking about restructuring the entire framework around how modern (and even “primitive”) societies are built. Yet, we are the ones who got ourselves into this mess – we created and currently uphold the conditions that cause people to be enslaved. Thus, it's arguably our own responsibility to fix things: it's our job to wholly welcome and embrace the suck. If our enemy is the world serpent Jörmungandr, then we are literally nothing less than Thor himself: it is our sacred duty to do battle with this nasty thing, even if it kills us.

Of course, this is no microscopic task we find ourselves facing, as modern human societies are so absolutely pitiless to the human individual that they make assimilation by the Borg collective – the absolute worst and most terrifying fate science fiction authors could come up with – almost seem preferable. The Borg, at least, augment those they assimilate to bring them up to speed with the rest of the collective. As anyone who works with refugees or displaced persons knows, that's not exactly the case with most countries' immigration processes in real life. In many cases, it's a matter of giving a new country everything that one has, and once one is destitute and willing to take whatever work comes one's way (no matter how exploitative), hoping to receive a “maybe” in six months to a couple decades later. Moreover, this is merely on the international front: this doesn't involve what societies do to those within them who are slightly different, unique, or just happen to be born to the wrong ethnic group or gender or are otherwise

disadvantaged. Individual human biases tend to get amplified when those humans organize themselves into groups, and when those groups organize themselves into societies they often become insurmountable obstacles for individuals: no matter what the reader's ideology has told them to the contrary.

Again, one should keep in mind the image of a narcotics dealer who cooks up a batch of methamphetamines only to get high on them before selling the product, as that is the best analogy to what we are dealing with. Our task, it must be remembered, is to stage an intervention – get the dealer *clean*, get him to stop *dealing*, and to then go on and live a healthy and productive life. As anyone who has struggled with addiction or has worked with addicts knows, however, that's going to be a long and painful process: especially the part with getting people to admit that we even have a problem in the first place.

Thus, it's worth examining in substantial detail how societies create their own pool of vulnerable people to fulfill their slave labor needs: from cheap, plentiful sex to keeping a steady supply of organs and tissues available for the sick. Some of these systems will be examined now and in the following pages, while others will be examined throughout the remainder of this work.

It's terrifying how easily people fall prey to slavery, and this in large part has to do with how easy it is for persons to become *vulnerable* to such schemes. This is important to understand: traffickers are exceptionally good at identifying people's weaknesses. This allows them to then get inside their victims' heads and manipulate them, since slavery is, as was discussed in the previous chapters, much more about psychological and social forms of control and coercion than it is about physical restraints. In particular, traffickers prey heavily on those with little or no social safety net (DHS).¹² Desperation more than anything else breeds vulnerability: poverty and the need to provide for one's family is a frequently cited root cause and reason that survivors cite as having been lured into a trafficking situation (British Columbia, Province of, 2014). Merely seeking a better life – quite literally *pursuing the American dream* – is perhaps the most frequent precursor to a trafficking situation identified in the literature to date (Belles, 2015; Campbell, 2016; Polaris, 2018; Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021).

Figure 4.2 shows a list of some of the most common vulnerabilities that predispose persons to experience trafficking. This list is not meant to be exhaustive; rather, it is meant to highlight the most significant trends that prompt entire populations to be at a disadvantage when it comes to suffering from modern day slavery. These vulnerabilities are strongly documented in the literature and have been identified as crucial characteristics of groups that disproportionately suffer from trafficking when compared to the overall population.

These vulnerabilities or risk factors tend not to occur on their own in a vacuum; rather, they tend to co-occur and overlap, interlocking and compounding upon one another much like the strands of slavery itself. Where you find one vulnerability, you tend to find another. A “perfect storm” of several – if not *many* – of the above risk factors is the norm in trafficked individuals rather than the exception (Polaris, 2023). For instance, women and girls are predisposed to suffering from trafficking due to the prevalence of sexism/misogyny in society, whereas Black individuals are predisposed to experiencing trafficking due to the effects of racism. Black women, however, are affected by *both*: when one combines the misogyny women experience with the racism Black

persons experience, one gets the combined impact that these forces have, which is called **misogynoir** (FG Staff, 2020). This results in Black women being especially overrepresented among trafficked populations, with Black women who have even more vulnerabilities – such as having grown up in the foster care system, in poverty, or who identify as a member of the LGBT community – being at even *higher* risk for experiencing trafficking (National Black Women’s Justice Institute, 2022).

- | | |
|---|--|
| ● Low self-esteem or self-worth | ● Addiction/Substance abuse |
| ● Recent relocation or migration | ● Homelessness/housing instability |
| ● Previous history of abuse or neglect (particularly sexual abuse) | ● Mental health issues or instability |
| ● Prior lived experience of corporal punishment | ● Prior lived experience in the foster care system |
| ● Poverty (strongly correlated with all others except LGBTQ identity) | ● Identifying as LGBTQ |
| ● Racial/ethnic background and minority status | ● Female gender |
| ● Prior or current domestic/family violence situation | ● Immigrant status |
| ● High ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) score | ● Prior criminal conviction |
| ● Childhood, or elderly status | ● Lack of education |

Figure 4.2. (Shared Hope International, 2023; Polaris, 2018a; Polaris, 2019; Polaris, 2023; Bales, 2012; Zarnowski, 2022; UNODC, 2020).

Common Trafficking Vulnerabilities.

The tragic reality is that it takes *a lot* for life to go right in our supposedly advanced

civilizations, and it really only takes *one* thing for life to go tragically wrong – and that one thing is often completely out of our control. When people concerned with social justice talk about matters of *privilege*, this is what they are referring to. Having “privilege” doesn’t mean that one has had it easy or is entitled; rather, privilege merely refers to obstacles and vulnerabilities that one didn’t have to overcome. Much of our language and framing about how people make “good” and “bad” choices in life are simply a matter of what opportunities are available to people as a result of random birth circumstances: one does not *make* a good choice inasmuch as they have good choices *available* to make. To this end and where human trafficking is concerned, having a stable childhood home, not being raped, and not experiencing childhood abuse are all forms of privilege that not even the most radical of social justice movements have begun to examine in depth. Those of us who have otherwise “normal,” so-called regular lives should be truly thankful for the fact that we have escaped much of civilization’s most vile machinations against those who have been less fortunate.

The United Nations 2020 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons gives some insight as to how these vulnerabilities affect predisposition to trafficking. In particular, the report highlighted the specific factors and liabilities that traffickers exploited in a sample of 233 prosecuted human trafficking cases. 20% of cases involved a child with a dysfunctional family, with another 9% of cases involving children being denied or deprived of parental care. Immigration status was a factor in merely 10% of cases, again revealing that most victims of trafficking are trafficked within their country of origin (UNODC, 2020; Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021; Polaris, 2019). However, in 6% of cases a lack of education or limited knowledge of a foreign language was a factor that traffickers exploited. A mental, behavioral, or neurological disorder was a vulnerability exploited in 10% of cases, with physical disability being exploited in 3% of cases. In 13% of cases, the intimate partner of the victim was identified as the victim’s trafficker, once again highlighting that threats of the worst kind tend to lie much closer than in the fantastical fairy tales we tell ourselves (Polaris, 2023; UNODC, 2020). Nonetheless, economic need and poverty was the most identified factor, playing a role in 51% of cases examined by the UNODC.

However, it’s important to note that these numbers were found to be vast underestimates in a 2023 survey of trafficking survivors by Polaris, with even more co-occurrence documented among individual vulnerabilities.

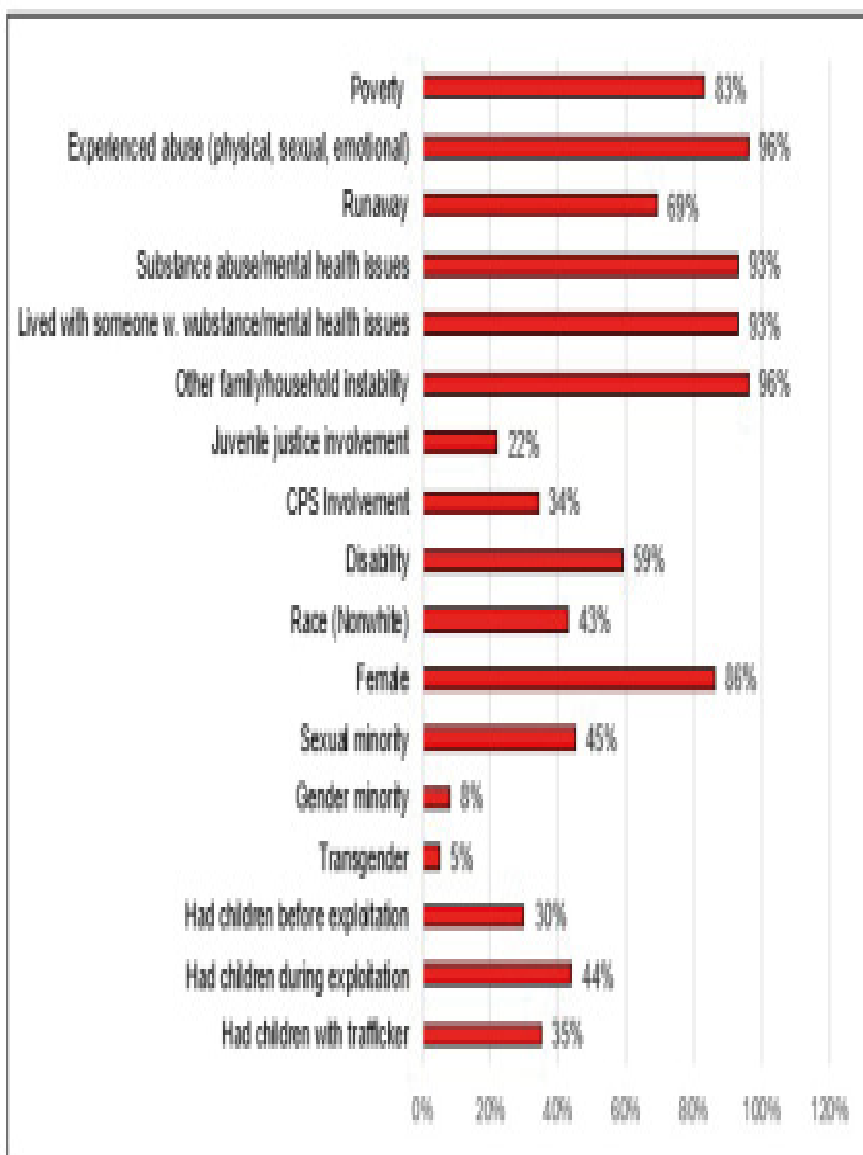


Figure 4.3. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Underlying Vulnerabilities of Trafficking Survivors*, using Polaris, 2023 data.

Note the intertwining nature of vulnerabilities to experiencing human trafficking, especially as they apply to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). It's never just *one* thing that leads to exploitation, but many.

Clearly, we need to examine these vulnerabilities more closely to see how

individuals become predisposed to trafficking and how these factors in turn overlap and reinforce one another to increase the risk to individuals and entire populations. Only then can we begin to rectify the problem and change the narratives surrounding human trafficking.

¹ In this instance, this came out to be about 90 agencies (Digital Staff, 2021). Additionally, for those unfamiliar with the operation dynamics of law enforcement, most police officers rely on working overtime to make ends meet. Operations such as this are where most of those overtime hours come from. The reader, of course, foots the bill.

² Let me also make one thing clear: whenever the media reports that “municipal employees” were arrested in stings like this, what they’re actually saying is that *cops* were among the Johns arrested – see (Digital Staff, 2021). Law enforcement is part of the problem, and we must be honest about that fact.

³ Most Americans wouldn’t recognize socialism if it deposited a Social Security check into their FDIC-insured bank account, but politics isn’t about objective facts.

⁴ This is not to say strippers are not sex trafficked, nor that strip clubs are not hotbeds of sex trafficking. Again, this is a matter of nuance that seems lost on many in the movement due to overly moralistic concerns over women’s choice of employment and, more specifically, what they do with their bodies.

⁵ Idiots. I’m surrounded by idiots.

⁶ Nehme, 2023.

⁷ The misogyny of the narratives that much of the anti-trafficking movement is based on is worthy of an entire book in itself.

⁸ For the record, the Agency has fully admitted to both incidents.

⁹ Or three, depending on how you count them.

¹⁰ However, immigrants, especially *undocumented* immigrants, still account for a disproportionate amount of the trafficked population when compared to their overall population.

¹¹ More to the point, it’s funny how the “globalists” and the people complaining the loudest about said globalists turn out to be the exact same people, just decades apart. Of course, when these people talk about “globalists” they are in fact merely trying to shift the blame for their own actions and policies to the world’s oldest scapegoats: the Jews.

¹² Thus, one would think it would be common sense to *increase* the social safety net to protect these individuals from trafficking, if we were truly serious about fighting modern day slavery.

Chapter 5

Systemic Factors: The Structure of Modern Slavery

“The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding.”

– Albert Camus

Slavery follows established patterns of society: as society is structured, so too is slavery. Nowhere is this more evident than when we examine how trafficking breaks down along racial and gender lines. As our examination of misogynoir previously indicated, patterns of slavery intersect and compound in myriad ways.

Legacies of Old

It is crucial to consider historical context when examining modern trends (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Cook Heffron, 2018). This is simply because of causality: what happened in the past informs and dictates the present. This should not be controversial. Unfortunately, this rather mundane notion has become ridiculously politicized in recent years to the point that one can't even refer to undisputed historical events without being accused of having some radical political agenda. This is endlessly damaging to our efforts to eradicate slavery. Those who fail to learn from the past are destined to repeat it, as the saying goes, and it doesn't take much examination to realize that we *are* repeating history. To phrase it better, we never really stopped doing what we were doing in the past; it just became less noticeable – *it changed its form*, shedding its skin.

The legacy of chattel slavery and the subsequent era of Jim Crow/Black codes in the United States, and that of colonialism in the larger world, are intrinsic to the patterns of modern human trafficking, as are the genocides of native peoples in the Americas and the world over (Nunn, 2008). Poverty, substance abuse, child abuse (particularly incest, physical abuse, and child sexual abuse rates), and other factors intersect when this historical context is considered (Wallace, 2017; Smith, 2011; Bowser & Charles-Nicolas, 2021). Many of modern society's problems can be traced to longstanding historical trends that were quietly swept under the rug and which are now considered “impolite” to discuss. Similarly, much modern political discourse is still rooted in the question of slavery and the underlying dynamics of power and control. This is evident in both the literature and the data that we have on populations that are most victimized by the modern forms of slavery.

The psychosocial implications of these findings are immense and reveal much about our modern mental health crisis, up to and including even the epidemic of gun violence plaguing the country. Other authors have described how descendants of slaves and those of slave owners are affected profoundly differently by the legacy historical slavery has on modern society, yet both in adverse ways that go beyond the scope of what is generally considered “generational trauma” (Bowser & Charles-Nicolas, 2021; Wallace, 2017; Smith, 2011). Both Whites and Blacks are adversely affected by historical slavery in modern America, and abundant evidence suggests that this trend holds true in other countries for other races and ethnicities, albeit in different ways unique to the historical

challenges of the specific society in question (Smith, 2000; Bowser & Charles-Nicolas, 2021; Nunn, 2008). This serves as a poignant example that slavery harms even the slave masters in society, and that this blight must once and for all be eradicated. Similarly, one can see a similar pattern arise: that prioritizing short term gain always comes at a terrible, and often totally predictable, long-term cost (Nunn, 2008). These are important avenues for future research that the reader is urged to consider. However, we shall limit our discussion to how various forms of discrimination render populations vulnerable to slavery.

Only recently has the United States government acknowledged the connection between systemic racism and trafficking phenomena (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021). Despite this recent development, the connection has long been known, especially as it pertains to the issue of sex trafficking. Race and racism have played a crucial role in creating the problem of sex trafficking in the United States – in particular, the sex trafficking of domestic minors (DMST for short; Butler, 2015). Furthermore, racism has critically undermined policy implemented to address sex trafficking and has drastically hampered the so-called modern abolition movement. Of particular concern are persistent myths about the sexuality of young girls of color that inherently promote risky sexual behavior among these minors – myths that the antitrafficking movement actually perpetuate through “public education” initiatives (Butler, 2015; Powell, 2023). Despite the antitrafficking movement – as well as much of America – having an almost laser-like focus on child sex trafficking, the tendency to absolutely ignore the racial roots of the problem result in the continued growth of DMST, hence why we’ve made so little progress more than twenty years after the passage of the TVPA (Woods, 2014; Powell, 2023; see also Butler, 2015; Chong, 2014; Gonzalez, 2022).

Policymakers have continued to ignore the root factor of race and the intersections it has with other factors that cause individuals to become vulnerable to trafficking, such as ignoring how criminalization disproportionately affects disadvantaged populations, especially women of color (Gonzalez, 2022; Butler, 2015). Women of color are typically predisposed to experiencing trafficking due to marginalization and structural impoverishment caused by racial stereotyping, as well as the fact that sexual violence is a fact of life among socially excluded men and women (Chong, 2014). The reality of sexual violence among the socially ostracized reaches further than merely along the lines of race, as we shall soon see, but it is sufficient for now to understand that it is compounded by vulnerabilities of sex and gender (Gonzalez, 2022; Chong, 2014; Powell, 2023). These gross disparities become all the more appalling when one examines forced labor and sexual exploitation in the American prison and immigrant detention industry.

A 2011 study conducted by the Department of Justice gives insight into how these dynamics play out in the real world. Of 460 survivors of sex trafficking examined, over 40% were Black, despite Black Americans only making up 13.6% of the overall United States population at the time of the study, exclusive of instances where race was unknown (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011; Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Further examination of the data revealed additional overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in trafficked populations: individuals of Hispanic/Latinx descent accounted for 23% of sex trafficking survivors while Hispanics accounted for only 16.3% of the total population. 26% of sex trafficking survivors were White, compared to 74.8% of the

population.

Similar racial disparity was evident in the labor trafficked populations. 63% of those found to be labor trafficked identified as Hispanic (as opposed to 16.3% of the U.S. population) and 17% were of Asian ethnicity (5.6% of the general U.S. population); Unlike other populations described, the reporting of labor trafficking of Black persons was limited only to “high-quality data” in Banks & Kychelhahn, 2011 (Table 5), quantifying only 9.5% of the labor trafficked population out of these “high quality” reports (as compared to 13.6% of the general population). This is likely an underreporting of the Black population that experiences labor trafficking.

The fact that the Black population is reported on differently is concerning, and comparisons to other populations are not possible from this particular data.¹ Only one White individual was identified in a labor trafficking situation, representing 1.5% of the labor trafficked population. The combined sex and labor trafficked population examined in the study (sex trafficked N=527 , labor trafficked N=63, combined N=527) broke down along racial and ethnic lines to be 20.1% White (N=106), 31.7% Black (N=167), 24.5% Hispanic (N=129), 4.9% Asian (N=26), 6.6% other (N=35), and approximately 12% unknown (N=63). (See Figure 5.1.) The percentages reported here are likely to dramatically change when prison forced labor populations, those subject to wage theft, and even those included in the H-Visa immigration system are taken into account (Zarnowski, 2022a). Future research needs to consider these populations when updating these numbers, as well as more carefully reporting on the labor trafficking of the Black population.

A clear pattern emerges from this data: slavery never went anywhere.

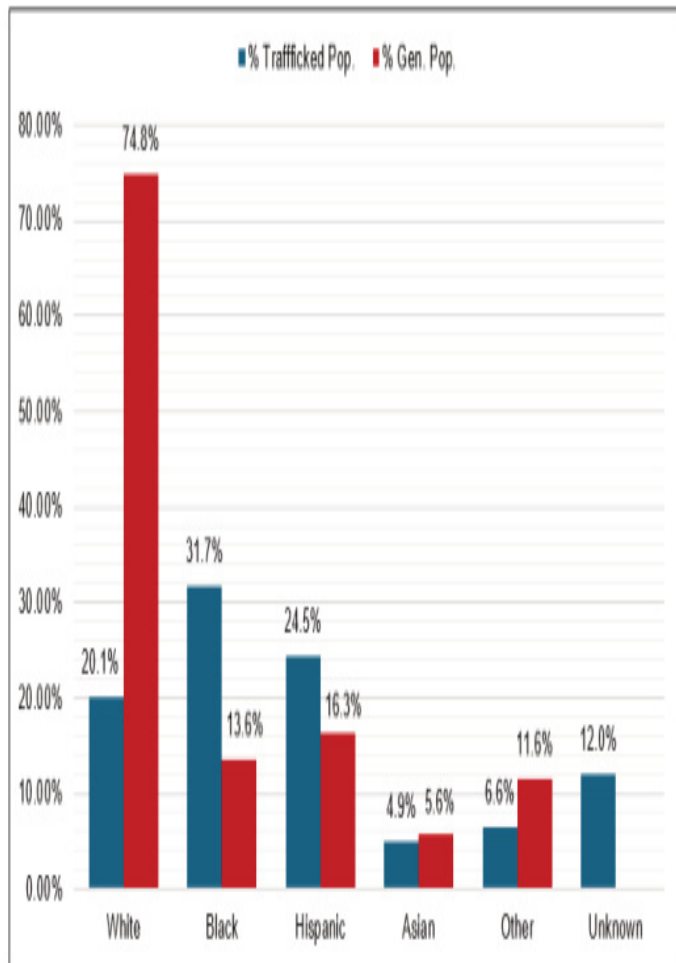


Figure 5.1. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Racial demographics of the trafficked population vs. general population*, using Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011 and 2010 Census data.

Note the dramatic overrepresentation of racial minorities within trafficked populations and the equally dramatic *underrepresentation* of White populations within the same group. One should also be cautious of the underrepresentation of Asian minorities in the trafficked population for reasons that will become clear in later chapters.

Additionally, 94% of sex trafficking victims were female, with 68% of labor

trafficking victims being female, thus revealing the gendered nature of slavery. In total, 90.5% of all trafficking survivors identified by the Department of Justice were women. (Figure 5.2.) Of sex trafficking victims, 83% were citizens of the United States. Of labor trafficking victims, the vast majority were identified as being foreign nationals, with 67% being undocumented foreign aliens and 28% being lawful U.S. residents or guest workers.²

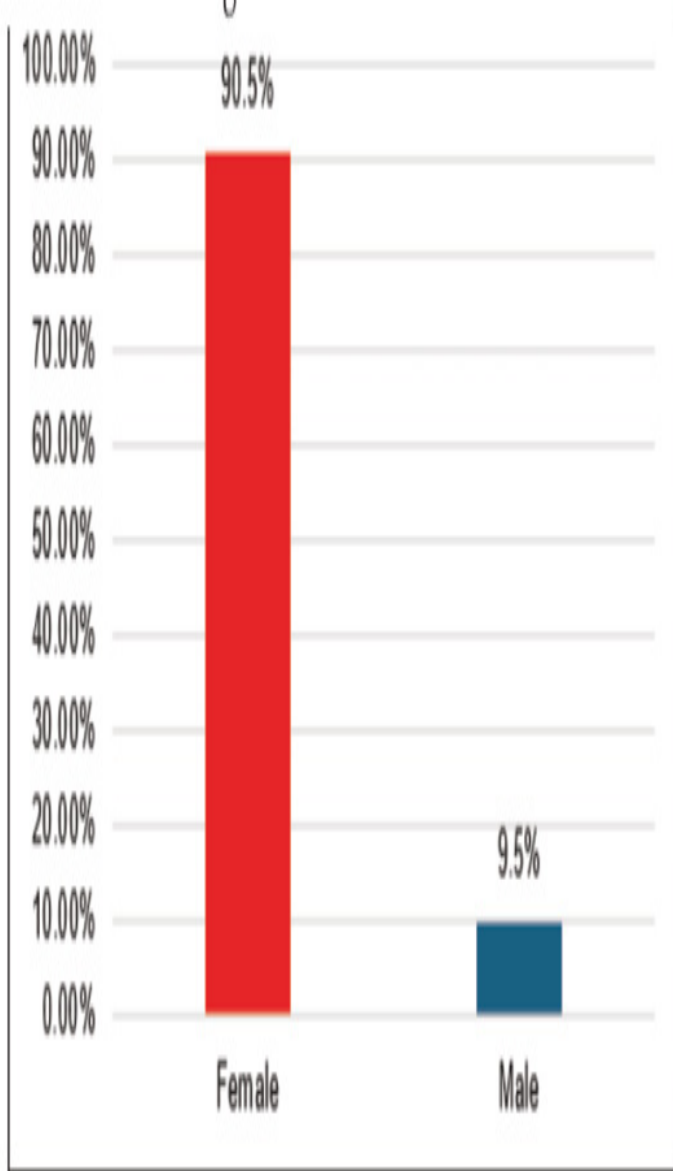


Figure 5.2. (Zarnowski, 2023) *The feminized nature of slavery in America*, using data from Banks and Kyckelhahn, 2011. Women outnumber men by more than 9 to 1 in slavery in America. Thus, if one is not looking for male victims, one simply won't find them.

The Department of Justice study is significant in that it was largely the first of its

kind, and for a long time the only one of its kind. Most of its findings have since been found to be relatively accurate in measurement of the demographics of those who are most frequently victimized by traffickers (Polaris, 2019; Polaris, 2023).

The Problem of Language, Revisited: DMST and Missing Persons

The racialized nature of slavery is even more apparent when one examines occurrences of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST). Per the FBI's own statistics, in 2017 52.5% of all "juvenile prostitution" arrests were of Black children (UCR, 2018). Obviously, this is grossly disproportionate to the juvenile Black population of the United States. However, if one recalls the TVPA discussed in the introduction, one will see yet another troubling aspect of the problem here: there is simply no such thing as a child prostitute. These children are *sex trafficking victims*, all of whom law enforcement treats as criminals. Much to this point, they're counted in the FBI's own "crime" stats. Again, we find that law enforcement is contributing as much to the problem as they are fabled to be solving.

Upon looking at the statistics, one would think that this racial disproportionality merely affected Black children. This stunning reality certainly bears repeating: over half of all cases of "juvenile prostitution" are Black children. And at first glance, this appears to be the case: 45.2% of arrests in this category were for White children, 0.9% were for Indigenous youth, 1.4% were for youth of Asian descent, and a whopping 0% were for children of Pacific Islander ethnicity. If you add up all these percentages, you get 100% of the total population that was arrested for "juvenile prostitution" simply being victims of DMST.

But as we saw in a previous chapter, figures lie, and liars figure. Especially when it comes to crime statistics.

Consider the following: was 0% of the DMST survivor population *really* Pacific Islander or Hawaiian children? Worded differently, were *zero* Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children sex trafficked in the United States during 2017?

No, of course not – for one, DMST is a huge but often unnoticed problem in Hawaii (Roe-Sepowitz & Jabola-Carolus, 2021), and two, the statistics merely reflect those that were *arrested* by law enforcement for being trafficked in this manner. Less than 0.5% of all minors in the United States identify as Native Hawaiians and/or other Pacific Islanders, and as such there aren't going to be a lot of arrests for this category (Kids Count Data Center). A similar problem occurs when we consider that 15.3% of those minors arrested for being DMST survivors are Hispanic. Again, this appears to be the case: 45.2% of arrests in this category were for White children, 52.5% were Black minors, 0.9% were for Indigenous youth, 1.4% were for youth of Asian descent, and 0% were for children of Pacific Islander ethnicity. Add them all together, and you get 100% of the population that was arrested in 2017 for being sex trafficked as a minor. This makes mathematical sense. Now, all one has to do is add in the 15.3% of this population that are Hispanic and one gets a major statistical headache: *115.3%* of all of those who were arrested in 2017.

Clearly, there's an error somewhere, and it has surprisingly far-reaching consequences for our understanding of the racialized nature of trafficking. This error arises in that Hispanic/Latinx origin is measured separately from race, under another concept altogether defined as *ethnicity* in crime statistics, as per UCR, 2018. The same

problem occurs in U.S. census data (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011) as well as all the other scores of population data that I examined to confirm the last few pages or so of findings. The significant exception to this rule was the 2011 Department of Justice Study, which measured Latinx origin as a race alongside Whites, Blacks, and everyone else, not as a category unto itself – revealing a better picture of the color of slavery (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011).

Here's why that's a problem: by measuring Hispanic ancestry under its own separate category of *ethnicity* as opposed to *race*, the true racialized nature of violence and crime against persons of color becomes obscured. Hispanics, it turns out, are counted under the "White" category by the federal government: hence the common terms "Hispanic White" and "non-Hispanic White" (Kids Count Data Center). All races except for "Hispanic or Latino" are somewhat ridiculously preceded by the term, "Non-Hispanic" whenever Hispanics are counted for separately as a race in the material reviewed.

Now let's review those statistics for children arrested for being DMST survivors again. 45.2% of all children arrested were White (UCR, 2018). This is only slightly below the 51% of the general U.S. minor population that identifies as White (Kids Count Data Center). However, recall that 15.3% of those arrested were Hispanic, and this population was neatly tucked under the cover of "White." Thus, this in turn reveals that the population of those arrested for DMST more accurately breaks down as 29.9% of arrests in this category being for White children (51% of all U.S. minors), 15.3% were Hispanic minors, 52.5% were Black minors (14% of all U.S. children), 0.9% were for Indigenous youth, 1.4% were for youth of Asian descent, and 0% were for children of Pacific Islander ethnicity. Much as with the larger trafficking picture, we can see that sex trafficking of domestic minors drastically affects children of minority racial and ethnic status more than it does Whites, with Whites being *underrepresented* in trafficked populations and minority groups being significantly *overrepresented* in all trafficked populations. In fact, the majority of all trafficked persons appear to be persons of color, and much more specifically, *women and girls of color*, per the sum of the data (reference Figures 5.1-5.3).

So why are so many middle-aged, upper-middle class White women afraid of being trafficked in the middle of Whole Foods? Why are so many stories told in the anti-trafficking movement about White, middle-to-upper class teenagers who "lost their way?" Why is it so easy, so incredibly easy, so *you can bet your life on it easy*, that if I told you an anti-human trafficking "awareness" poster featured a person in a trafficking scenario – or even a trafficking survivor – in its main image, that you could instantly guess the person's skin color without even thinking about it?⁴

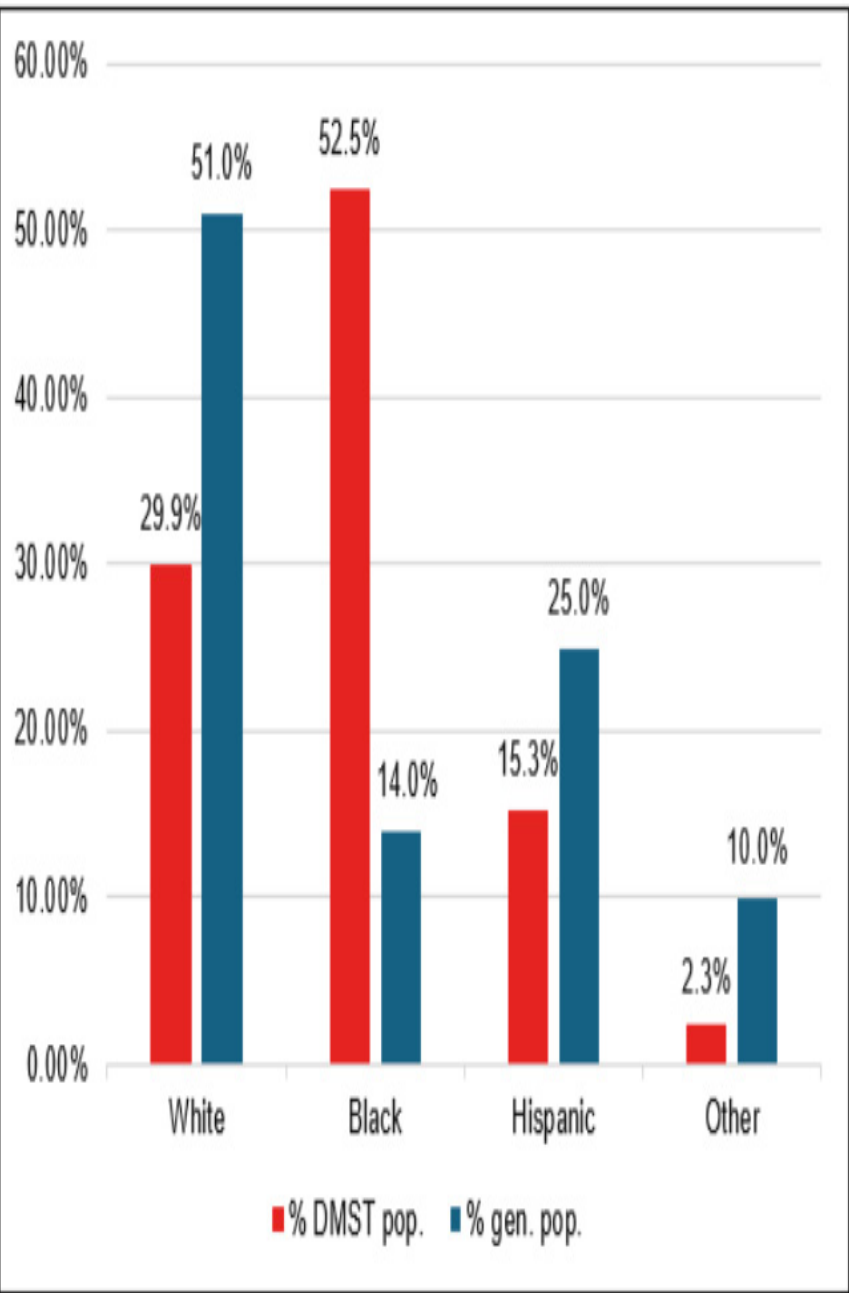


Figure 5.3. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Racial demographics and criminalization of victimhood in domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST).*

Yet, the problem goes much, much deeper than even this. Returning to the issue of

missing children that was examined briefly in the third chapter, we find that many of the demographic trends arising in the modern slave trade also occur in the demographics of missing persons. The phenomena are deeply intertwined, even if the common understanding of this link is wrong. To begin with, it's important to note that persons from Black communities are five times more likely to go missing than persons from White communities (Missing People, 2022).

Now, recall that 346,237 reports of missing children were filed in 2020. Again, this doesn't mean that 346,247 children actually went missing, just that such a number of reports were filed (National Crime Information Center (NCIC), 2021). The data reveals that 125,727 of these reports were for Black children. Additionally, 197,381 White children went missing, suggesting that approximately 71,650 more White youth went missing than Black youth did. Yet in the report, there's a clear hint that not all is what it seems with this data: an asterisk appears next to the number for the missing White children, and its reference note reads, "Race White – includes Hispanic" (NCIC, 2021, p. 7).

This is problematic for a number of reasons; first, it denies the Hispanic community a count of their missing and murdered, all while inflating "White" numbers, increasing a sense of White victimhood and centering. Similarly, classifying all Latinos as White ignores decades of research indicating that 24% of Latinos identify as Afro-Latino – in short, they identify as Black (Brown, 2022). If these cases were counted correctly, this would further increase the number of *actual* missing Black children, who outnumber all other races when it comes to missing children; indeed, an overwhelming 62% of the newly reported cases in 2020 consisted of Black children, who only accounted for 14% of the total youth population of the United States (Brown, 2022; Kids Count Data Center). The data is further polluted by the fact that immigrants and migrants don't always report their missing out of fear of deportation, a fear more often associated (rightly or wrongly) with the Hispanic community more so than other populations. And yet another confounding factor is the fact that law enforcement does not always provide families of color with the requisite missing person reports, all while deprioritizing missing minority children as "runaways" or as being associated with criminal enterprises such as gangs, often without any evidence (Brown, 2022; Black and Missing Foundation, 2022). Thus, even though the Black child population is overrepresented in missing child samples, this nonetheless is probably still an issue of underreporting of the number of Black children – and all minority children – that actually are missing.

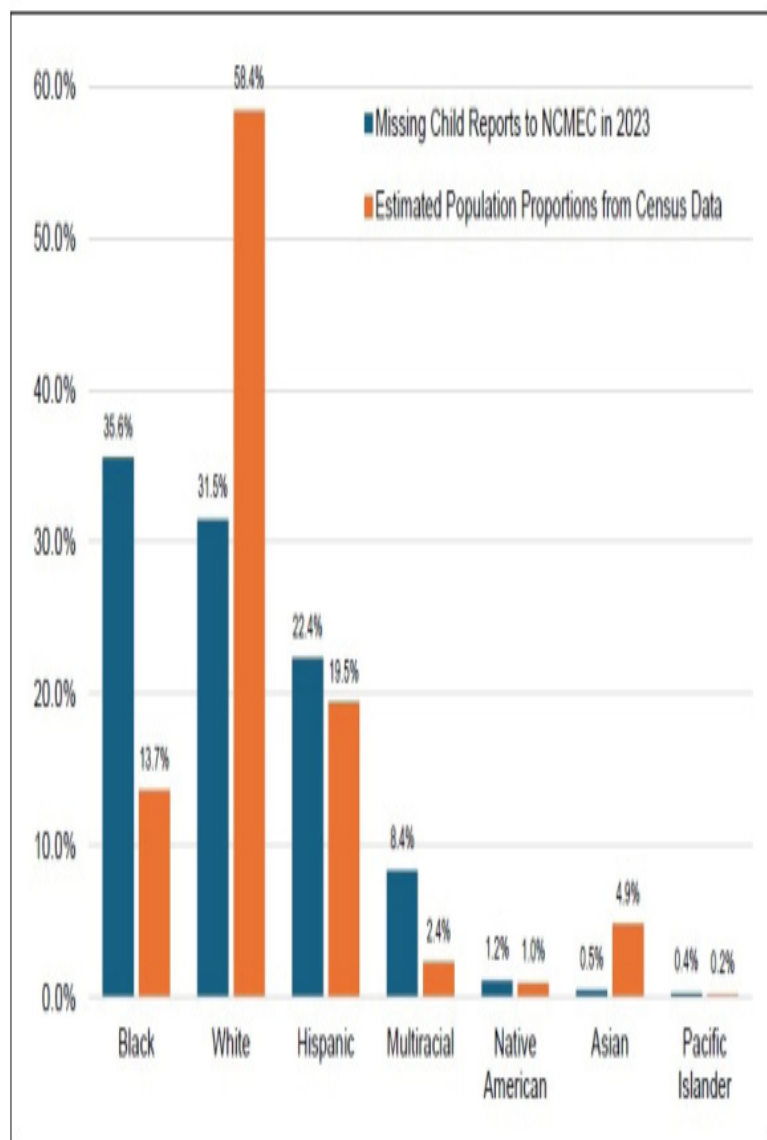


Figure 5.4. *Reports of Missing Children Made to NCMEC in 2023 Compared to Overall Population.* Note the overrepresentation of missing children among all groups except White and Asian. The reality is likely worse due to matters of underreporting among these and other racial minority communities.

(NCMEC) has caught on to this alarming trend. Noting that Black, Indigenous, and multiracial children are all grossly overrepresented in reports made to them regarding missing children, NCMEC compiled data from across several years to establish longer term trends (NCMEC, 2021). Of the missing children represented in the data set, 80% went missing from state care, such as from foster homes. Many communities of color were disproportionately represented in this 80% figure as well. It is also important to note that Pacific Islanders were overrepresented in the overall sample by at least 50% of their general U.S. population.

This is all compounded by biases in media coverage of slavery, human trafficking, and missing persons. This is best understood by what journalist Sarah Stillman popularized as “The Missing White Woman Syndrome,” although the phenomenon extends to more than just cases of missing persons. Simply stated, The Missing White Woman Syndrome indicates that a missing persons case will get significantly more media coverage if the missing person is an attractive, young White woman (Joffe).

Consider the case of Natalie Holloway, who disappeared on May 30, 2005 while on vacation in Aruba. Holloway, the reader might remember, was attractive, young, and White. Immediately, prayer vigils began, and by June 5, a mere five days later, trees and mailboxes were adorned with yellow ribbons as nonstop candlelight vigils continued around the country. A month and a half later on July 18, Latoyia Figueroa went missing in Philadelphia – five months pregnant with her second child. In contrast to Holloway, Figueroa was of African American and Hispanic origin. Whereas Holloway’s disappearance merited a full and immediate international police response and multinational press attention, it took eleven days for the Philadelphia police to even dedicate resources to look into Figueroa’s whereabouts. It was only upon having public attention directed to the case by CNN’s Nancy Grace that local law enforcement took action; however, Grace herself is hardly the hero of the story, intervening only because a local Philadelphia blogger had written to her about the case, literally *begging* her to give the case a mere fraction of the time she was dedicating to the Holloway disappearance (Joffe). Law enforcement, upon responding, were quoted as saying that they were getting involved in the case because “it’s about her pregnancy,” which raises an obvious question:

Why wasn’t Figueroa’s pregnancy an issue for them eleven days prior when she was first reported missing?

The academic literature reveals that this phenomenon is not just anecdotal, but rather a discernable fact: when it comes to missing persons, both African Americans and women are significantly underrepresented in televised news coverage – especially when it comes to missing children (Min & Feaster, 2010). A 2015 study highlighted just how bad the relationship is: while missing Black children account for 35% of the missing children in the NCIC database in the years examined, they accounted for only 7% of all media references (Moss, 2019). However, there are two sides to the problem of media coverage, as a careful examination of social media posts about missing children in *USA Today* revealed. It turns out that it’s not entirely the media that’s at fault, but rather also the consumer of the media and their implicit biases as well. The *USA Today* article focused on the dynamics of Missing White Woman Syndrome by examining the responses to videos regarding various missing children posted on Facebook by NCMEC, which had approximately 1.2 million followers at the time (Caruso, Looker, & Luthern,

2022).

The journalists examined NCMEC's posts between October 2019 and June of 2022, consisting of 375 videos for missing children. They found that NCMEC posted the most about missing Black children (139 times), followed by missing White (118) and Hispanic (91) children (Caruso, Looker, & Luthern, 2022). This is consistent with the statistics on the demographics of children reported missing to NCMEC. However, the engagement of the posts revealed shocking disparities along racial and gender lines.

Posts about White girls garnered the most views, averaging 63,068 per post, followed closely by posts about Hispanic girls which averaged 62,028 views. Hispanic boys followed the girls at an average of 58,393 per post, followed by White boys coming in fourth, averaging 50,666. Posts about missing Black girls and boys received greatly reduced interest from the public: girls averaging 38,296 and boys 37,553 per post (Caruso, Looker, & Luthern, 2022).

Average number of views per post for missing children

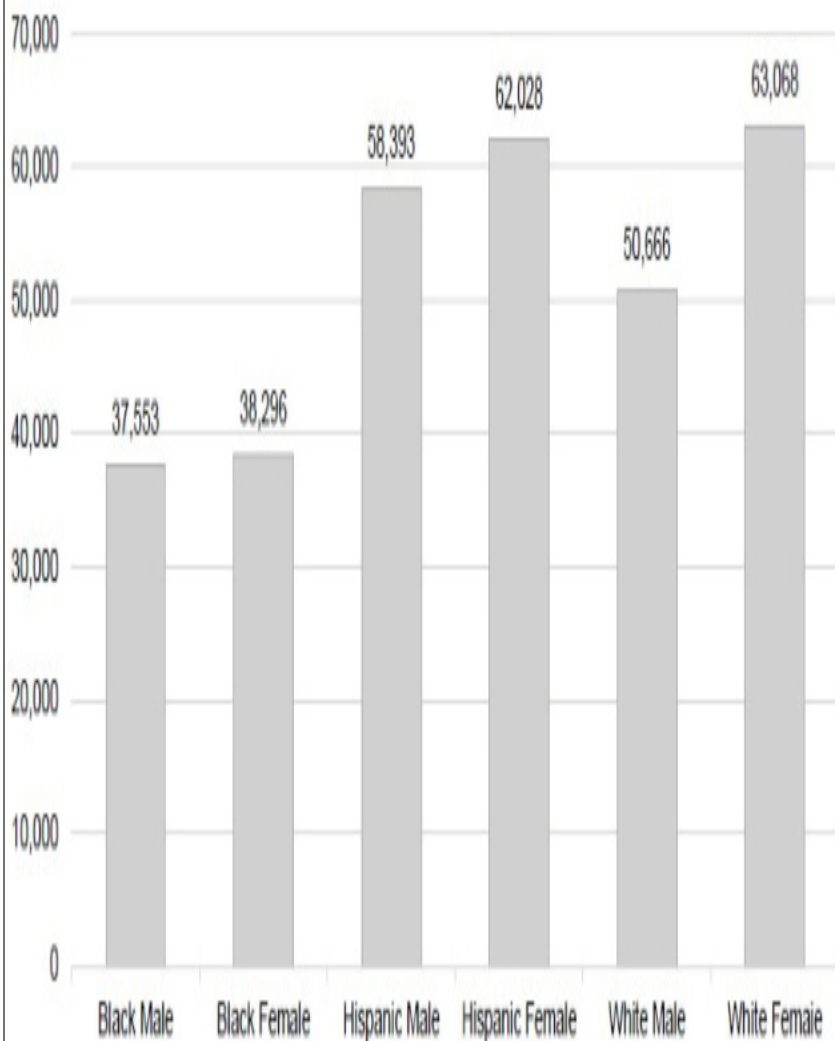


Figure 5.5. *The Missing White Woman Syndrome,*
with data from Caruso, Looker, & Luthern, 2022.

From these results one can see how gender and race are innately intertwined as

factors pertaining to vulnerability. The broader implications for human trafficking are enormous.

This significantly impacts the chances of recovery for children who go missing. A 2018 study identified that the disproportionate attention paid to White girls who go missing is merely one mechanism that race and gender affect in terms of the odds of a person being successfully recovered when they do go missing (van de Rijt, Song, Shor, & Burroway, 2018). A second mechanism the researchers identified are the socio-economic conditions that mobilize resources for recovery efforts, noting that,

Prominent examples of missing children are characterized not just by extraordinarily extensive media coverage but also by the very wealthy families from which they were separated ... missing children from wealthy families may receive more extensive police attention because of parents' greater ability to compel police to dedicate time and effort, through donations, network connections to those deciding on promotions, or other forms of power use.⁵

Resources, the authors noted, covary with the race of the missing children, with African American families reliably having the *least* amount, as poverty rates reveal.

Compounding this lack of resources to contribute to searches, networking, and media-seeking is the response of law enforcement to missing persons cases. Both the scope *and* the effectiveness of police responses to missing persons cases correlate with increased wealth in a neighborhood, which skews towards predominantly White neighborhoods (Van de Rijt, Song, Shor, & Burroway, 2018). Poorer neighborhoods tend to have much higher crime rates than wealthy neighborhoods, and poverty rates as well as the racial composition of neighborhoods covary with levels of police misconduct (Weitzer, 1999; Van de Rijt, Song, Shor, & Burroway, 2018). These combined factors result in gross disparities along racial and gender lines in recovery rates for missing children.

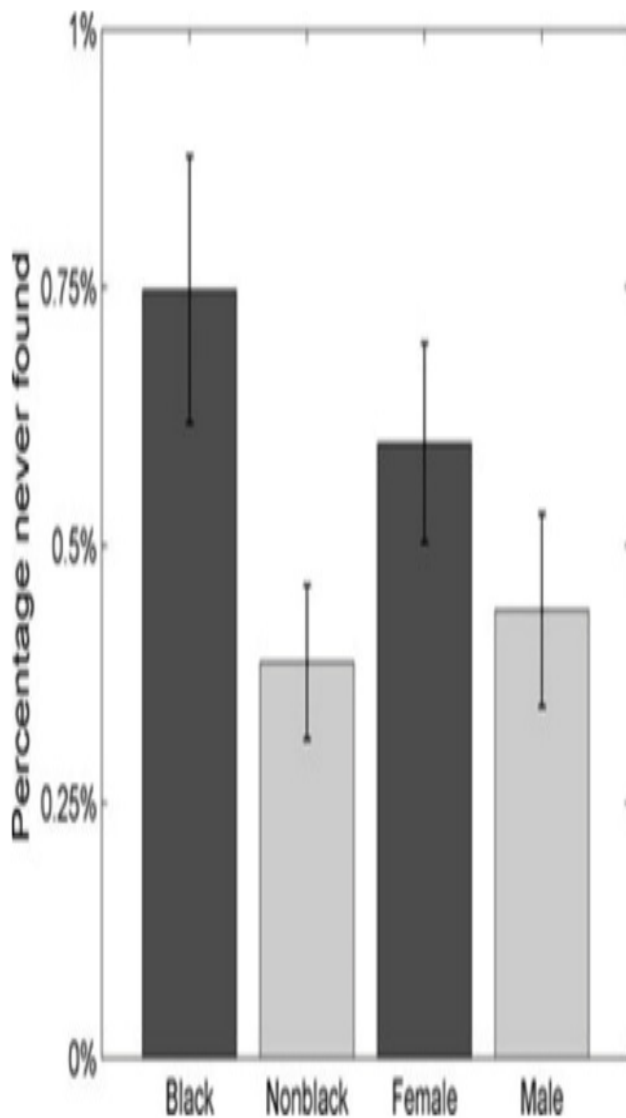


Figure 5.6. (van de Rijt, Song, Shor, & Burroway, 2018).

Racial and gender disparities among recovery outcomes in missing children's cases, as found in Van de Rijt, Song, Shor, & Burroway, 2018.

As if there were not enough factors contributing to structural vulnerability among

Black children and girls, another highly touted implementation of the child safety/missing child toolbox only exacerbates these problems. This is none other than the Amber Alert. The Amber Alert system was created in 1996 following the abduction and murder of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman. Theoretically, the system provides information on the missing child to the public in the area where the child was last spotted so that they can then identify the child or their abductor if they encounter them.

Unfortunately, the system has notable and well-known limitations: it can't be issued for all missing children, but only cases that fit very specific and narrow criteria. Specifically, if a child is classified as a "runaway," which is the default status that occurs if the child does not meet the Amber criteria, the alert cannot be issued, and fewer resources are dedicated to their recovery (Kearney). This problem is compounded by the fact that the implicit biases held by law enforcement often result in missing minority children being mislabeled as "runaways" when they have actually been abducted (Kearney; Borders, 2021; Mitchum, 2017; Moss, 2019). This has led to a number of tragic cases, such as that of Jhoulie Moussa, a 16 year-old Black girl who was missing for fourteen days before her body was found less than an hour's drive from her home, having been murdered by her boyfriend (Borders, 2021). Law enforcement had maintained that she was a "typical runaway" and was not in imminent danger. Another well-known instance is that of Rilya Wilson, a 4-year-old who disappeared from Florida DCF foster care, and whom the state did not notice was missing until over two years later.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

The Missing White Woman Syndrome is also highly relevant to the discussion of slavery when one looks at Indigenous populations, particularly the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, or MMIW for short. This epidemic of violence against Native women is not unique to the United States, but rather extends into Canada and across Latin America, with indigenous women suffering from a murder rate ten times the national average of the United States (Olsen, 2022). To compound this point, a 2010 study found stunning quantitative and qualitative differences in media coverage of missing Aboriginal women and missing White women in Canada. A White woman who went missing in Canada could expect three and a half times more media coverage than the missing Native woman, while missing Indigenous were less likely to appear on the front page of newspapers while also having shorter articles dedicated to them (Gilchrist, 2010). Similarly, the study produced an important finding that the reader must understand: while the gross disparity in coverage was a product of racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism, the disparity itself served to amplify these effects, resulting in even *more* disparity in coverage (Gilchrist, 2010).

This is particularly important to consider given the disproportionate rate at which Native peoples are exploited in modern slavery. In New Mexico, Indigenous persons account for 11% of the state's population, but account for nearly a quarter of all trafficking victims in the state (Pachelli, 2019). While data for how many Indigenous persons are labor trafficked does not exist, 25% of identified sex trafficking victims in Hennepin County, Minnesota identified as Indigenous/Native, as did 33% of those in Anchorage, Alaska, 50% in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and 52% in Vancouver, British Columbia (NCAI Policy Research Center, 2016).

Part of this high rate of predation on Indigenous women has to do with the fetishization of Indigenous people (Stern, 2021; see also Berger, 2023). This has led Cindy McCain, co-chair of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council and widow of the late Senator John McCain, to state that, “Native Americans are largely overlooked as victims” of human trafficking (Navajo-Hopi Observer, 2019). Much to McCain’s point, there was never any abolitionist movement to protect Natives from exploitation as there was for African Americans (Reséndez, 2017). This unsettling fact can be directly traced back to the genocidal adventures of Christopher Columbus⁶ and Ponce de Leon who, each within a year of setting foot in the Americas, set out to enslave the native population. The sheer brutality of these endeavors resulted in King Ferdinand arresting Columbus on charges that passed for “crimes against humanity” in the 1400s and having him deported to Spain, only to release him after six weeks in jail (Reséndez, 2017).⁷

The whitewashing of American history to gloss over the abuse of Indigenous women obscures just how severely the slave trade affected this population. As an example, many are incredibly familiar with the tale of Pocahontas, a Pamukey “Princess”⁸ who fell in love with John Smith, later married John Rolfe, and traveled the world as a goodwill ambassador of the New World. The problem with this narrative is that precisely none of this is true: Pocahontas was, in fact, North America’s first documented human trafficking victim (Miller, 2017). Her tragic story foreshadowed what was to happen to generations of Indigenous women.

To begin with, Pocahontas’ name wasn’t even Pocahontas; it was Amonute, and she had an additional name of Matoaka which she was called in private, as per Indigenous Pamukey conventions of the time. Amonute’s mother, Pocahontas, died giving birth to her; devastated by his wife’s death, her father – Chief Powhatan Wahunseneca – took to calling his daughter by her mother’s name, which meant “ill-behaved child” or “playful one” in their native tongue (Pak, 2020; Segura, 2022). 27-year-old John Smith met Amonute when he stayed at her father’s village for a few months. In the English understanding of events he was considered a captive, although having impressed Powhatan, he was explicitly under the Chief’s protection and was thus never under any threat of harm. Here, he and Amonute taught each other the basics of each of their respective languages. Smith would later claim that this is where he and Amonute fell in love (arguably to sell books that he went on to author) in that unique, special way that only a 27-year-old man and an eleven-year-old child could fall in love (Pak, 2020; Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women; Segura, 2022).

Amonute went on to marry a warrior named Kocoum at age fourteen. Shortly thereafter, she gave birth to a son, named “Little Kocoum.” Yet just after giving birth, rumors started to swirl that she was the target of a kidnapping plot by the English. These rumors were soon proven true when Amonute was tricked into boarding an English ship as a plot by Captain Samuel Argall to blackmail her father, Chief Wahunseneca of the Pamukey (Morales, 2017; Pak, 2020). She was unaware that the English had murdered her husband just after she boarded the ship, and that she would never see her son or father again. After securing Amonute, Argall intentionally left behind a copper pot at the village before leaving for Jamestown: a pot that he would later claim that he had “traded” for Amonute.

The natives did not have any comprehension for the act of rape prior to contact with European colonists; Indigenous America was remarkably sexually permissive, so sexually

coercive and abusive behavior was by and large unheard of (Pak, 2020; Graeber & Winslow, 2023). Thus, she had no context for what awaited her in Jamestown, where she was raped by at least one colonist, but likely many more. Spiraling into a deep depression, Amonute gave birth to a second son as a result of this sexualized violence, a boy who would be named Thomas Rolfe by the colonists after John Rolfe, whom Amonute was forced to marry against her will. However, there is some significant evidence that the biological father of Thomas was actually Sir Thomas Dale (Pak, 2020).

Amonute was forced to wear English clothes, convert to Christianity, and change her name to “Rebeca,” a proper Christian name (Segura, 2022). She was forced into an arranged marriage with Englishman John Rolfe, who was tasked with learning the Pamukey’s secret tobacco curing techniques for the financial benefit of England. Rolfe believed that marrying Amonute would help forge an alliance with the Pamukey, causing her father Chief Wahunseneca to finally part with the knowledge. However, the Chief did not attend the wedding out of fear of being kidnapped himself, sending only a pearl necklace as a gift to his daughter.

To cement the alliance, Rolfe took his newfound wife and son and boarded a ship for England, intent on demonstrating the “good will” that existed between the native tribes and the English colonists. To this end, Amonute was used as little more than a prop – eventually being falsely portrayed as the mythical Indian “Princess” who had embraced western culture and cast aside her savage, primitive ways. The myth was used to promote a heavily politicized agenda for the economic benefit of her traffickers, who were participants in a financial crime motivated by greed (Pak, 2020; Morales, 2017; Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021). The resulting propaganda provided for centuries of justification of indoctrination and genocide, all as a means to justify the colonization of the New World and the forcible Christianization of countless Indigenous children.

Yet, Amonute did not even live to see England. According to all witnesses, despite being in excellent health upon boarding her ship to the Old World, Amonute perished on the voyage. More specifically, she became violently ill after dining one evening with her “beloved” husband Rolfe and Samuel Argall – the man who kidnapped her. She died shortly thereafter, having outlived her usefulness to her traffickers. Many on board the ship believed that she had been poisoned, including several tribesmen, as she had been seen in good health just before the dinner. It is thought that she was killed in order to silence her from speaking about the atrocities she had witnessed and the horrors she had been subjected to in the colonies (Pak, 2020; Segura, 2022). Captain Argall and Amonute’s husband buried her in an unmarked grave in Gravesend, England.

Tragically, the legacy established with the trafficking of Amonute continues into the present, with Native populations subjected to some of the most violent and horrendous trafficking situations in the United States. While Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately targeted for sex trafficking, Native men and boys are targeted for labor trafficking in oil fields, sweatshops, agriculture, and as domestic “help” (Navajo-Hopi Observer, 2019). In a noted exception to the typical norm, kidnappings and forced abductions into trafficking is not unheard of on and near Native American reservations. This reflects the more violent nature of the kind of slavery that Indigenous peoples experience: of 105 American Indian sex trafficking survivors surveyed in Minnesota, 92% had been raped, 84% had been physically assaulted, 79% had been sexually abused as

children – *by an average of four perpetrators each* – while 72% had suffered traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) while being trafficked, 71% experienced psychological dissociation, and 52% suffered from PTSD (Farley, et al., 2011).

Most often, the perpetrators of these crimes are White males, and there are extensive ties to the “man camps” of oil fields (Murdoch, 2021; Stern, 2021a). Indeed, an overwhelming 97% of Indigenous female victims of stalking, sexual violence, psychological aggression, and physical violence experienced violence at the hands of an interracial perpetrator, with Indigenous men reporting similarly at 90% (Rosay, 2016). Strong evidence suggests that the oil industry fuels the problem of human trafficking of and sexual violence against Indigenous persons, reflecting and reinforcing long-term trends of colonialization (First Peoples Worldwide, 2020; Robinson, 2021; Stern, 2021a).

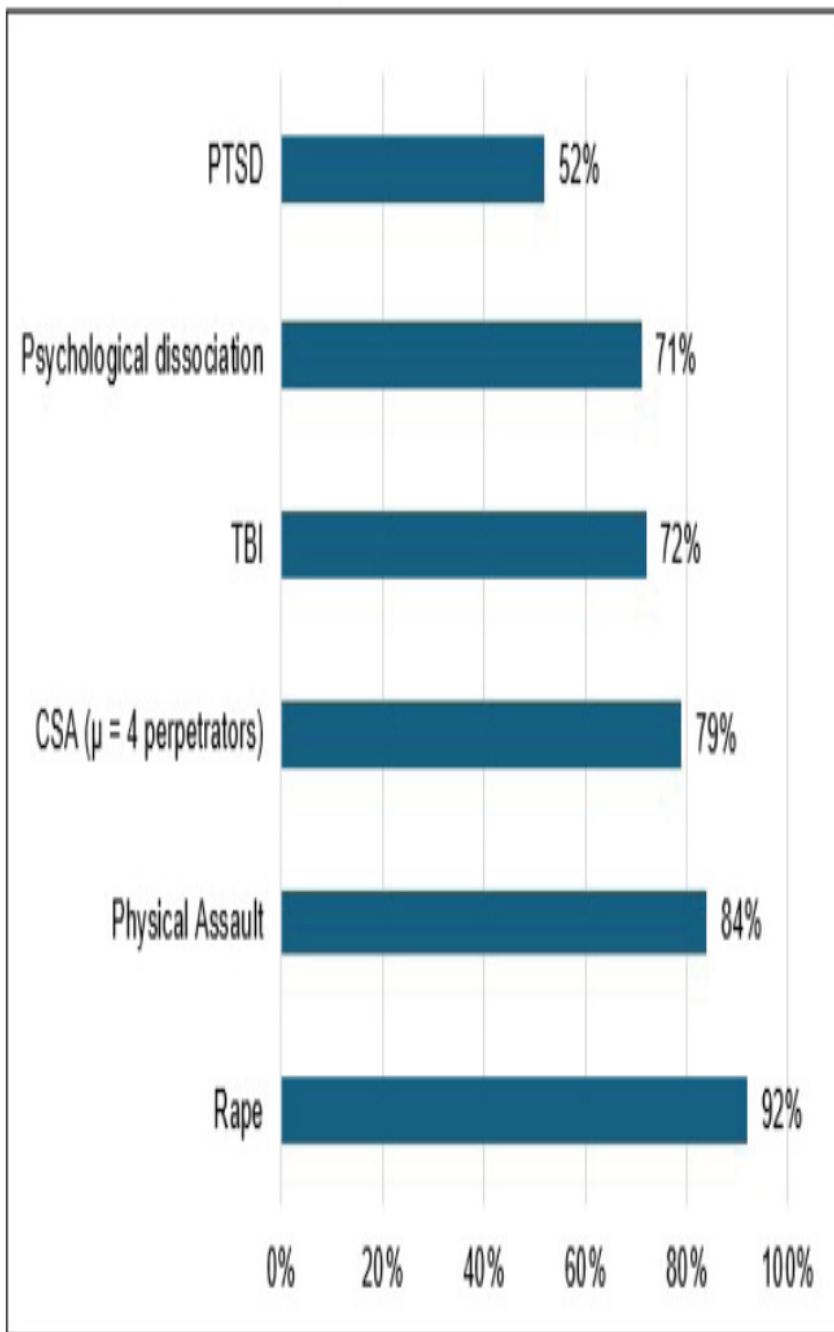


Figure 5.7. *Experiences of Indigenous sex trafficking survivors, using data from Farley, et al., 2011.*

These vulnerabilities intersect with others such as poverty and experience in the

foster care system. Native children can and often are taken from their families and placed in foster care for contrived reasons. This happens so often that it can be considered a form of genocide under the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: Indigenous children are four times as likely as non-native children to be placed in foster care, with Indigenous peoples accounting for 99% of the general population of the state of Oklahoma but 35% of that state's population in foster care (Potawatomi Nation, 2021).

Even so, there is evidence that these numbers reflect a vast underestimate of the real scope of trafficking among Indigenous peoples, for a peculiar reason: the phenomenon of racial shifting. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, White Americans began to selectively appropriate Nonwhite identities with greater frequency and freedom than they had in the past, largely due to the rise of counterculture and the New Age movements (Sturm, 2023). This can perhaps best be seen in the use of White sage, an herb sacred to Indigenous Americans, becoming popularized in New Age and Neopagan purification rituals (Miller, 2023; Berger, 2023). Its use has become so commonplace in these rituals that it is being overharvested, making the herb harder and harder for Indigenous Americans to find and afford to use in their traditional rites (Miller, 2023).

Yet, this form of appropriation – this *racial shifting*, as it is technically called – has much more devastating consequences for native populations than the distillation of sacred beliefs. Between 2010 and 2020, the Indigenous population of the United States rose by an astonishing 86.5% (Sturm, 2023). At first this would seem to be welcome news for the Native American population, but as we know by now, statistics are rarely all they're cracked up to be. Such population growth doesn't naturally occur. Demographers have noted that it is impossible to achieve such growth without immigration, and there's no evidence of masses of Native expatriates returning to America to account for such population changes. Instead, something different altogether is occurring to account for this astonishing demographic change: individuals who previously identified as White are now identifying as Native American (Sturm, 2023).

Thus, the data on Indigenous populations becomes blurred and contaminated as White Americans obtain Indigenous identities, but not Indigenous ethnicity or heritage.¹⁰ Combined with the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) and the fact that the United States government doesn't keep records of which or how many Indigenous persons go missing every year (Pember, 2018; Harrison, 2018), it becomes utterly impossible to identify trafficking patterns among Native populations. A silent genocide could be (and likely is) ongoing, and we would not know about it simply due to a lack of reliable data.

The Supply Chain, Reexamined

Of course, race and ethnicity are global factors of slavery and not just American determinants of trafficking and servitude, as much as some might like to pretend otherwise. The Hazara of Afghanistan are subject to human trafficking at rates unseen in the Pashtun and Tajik populations, just as the Rohingya of Myanmar are enslaved disproportionately to other ethnicities in the country (Zarnowski, 2022). Implicit bias is universal to the human experience, and its effects can be seen in every civilization one subjects to examination.

Nowhere is this legacy more apparent than on the continent of Africa, which has

been ruthlessly exploited by all comers since before the Roman Empire reigned. The legacy of this exploitation, racism, and colonialism is directly correlated with increased levels of human trafficking, both past and present. The numerous slave trades that Africa has experienced have had a strong adverse effect on the economic development of African countries, with countries that were historically more ruthlessly exploited by slaveholders being worse off economically than their peers (Nunn, 2008). Likewise, race is intrinsically interwoven into the processes and fabric of globalization, which continues to perpetuate horrific patterns of trafficking across Africa (Williamson, 2017). Nowhere is this more evident than when one examines the child sex tourism industry that plagues the continent (Jay, 2023).

Child sex tourism aside, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) provides perhaps the next best example of what the culmination of these factors looks like. The DRC exists in a state of semi-permanent civil war, where rape is a common form of terrorism that has been used against civilian populations for over 25 years. Such terrorism, more properly termed *war crimes*, has largely gone unpunished and uninvestigated by the reigning authorities and additionally has eerie similarities and connections to the Rwandan genocide (Barber, 2023). It is not much of a stretch to argue that the violence in the DRC is merely a lower-intensity continuation of the 1994 slaughter that took place in Rwanda over a period of one hundred days.

Nonetheless, all of this violence can be largely traced to one very simple fact, a fact that explains the unending conquest and continuing exploitation of Africa by outsiders throughout all of human history: the region is incredibly, almost *unbelievably*, rich in natural resources.

The DRC boasts a massive natural rainforest reserve that is abundant in biodiversity and lumber, in addition to possessing one of the top hydroelectric power capacities in the world. This is all in addition to sitting on top of oil and mineral deposits worth over \$24 trillion dollars (Basu, 2022). Thus, the area is a major contest zone for world powers. Yet despite this vast wealth, the populace remains incredibly impoverished, with a real GDP per capita ranking of 226 out of 229 countries in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2021).

Having only achieved independence from Belgium in 1960, the country suffered horribly under colonial rule, and has struggled to develop economically for many of the reasons given previously (see also Basu, 2022). These reasons include a genocide that killed at least 8-12 million Congolese under Belgian King Leopold II, a period now known as the Rubber Terror.¹¹ More recently, Russia's Wagner Group, made notorious for their crimes against humanity in Ukraine, have been documented committing many of the same atrocities in the DRC, albeit to far less global attention (Robert Lansing Institute, 2023). Wagner mercenaries have been deployed by multiple authoritarian African governments, not just the DRC, for the explicit purpose of targeting civilian populations – all the while they expand Russian influence and access to natural resources (Fabricus, 2022; Dalaa & Aksoy, 2021). Similarly, the DRC is an increasingly important partner to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Basu, 2022).



Figure 5.8. (Harris, 1904) *The Rubber Terror*. A Congolese man, Nsala, looks at the severed hand and foot of his five-year-old daughter, Baoli, who was killed and cannibalized by Belgian overseers as punishment for not making his rubber quota for the day. Nsala's wife was also killed and cannibalized - her name has since been lost to the ages.

the global economy: cobalt. Cobalt is essential to the functioning of modern electronics, particularly due to its use in rechargeable batteries. Smartphones, electric car batteries, televisions, computers, tablets, laptops, gaming systems, watches, hearing aids, pacemakers, and more all depend on this one particular chemical element, and we, in turn, often depend on these devices. The vast majority of the world's cobalt reserves are found in Congo. In fact, over 90% of all the cobalt that is mined in the world originates from this one country alone (Smith, 2023). Thus, he who controls this supply of cobalt controls the worlds' electronics.

In 2008, China and the DRC signed an agreement known as the Sicomines Pact. In plain terms, this agreement gave China nearly exclusive mining rights to copper and cobalt in the DRC while guaranteeing that China would invest in much-needed infrastructure in the DRC. As of 2020, the DRC accounted for over 70% of all cobalt production in the world, with Chinese investors exercising control over 70% of the DRC's mining sector (Basu, 2022). After being mined, cobalt ore is first sent to China before it is distributed to other countries for manufacturing purposes, demonstrating just how much control China exerts over the entire process. Only then is the finished product distributed. At any point in this supply chain labor trafficking can and often does occur, especially in China where members of the Uyghur minority, forcibly transferred from Xinjiang province, are enslaved across the country to produce goods such as AirPods and iPhones (Xu, et al., 2020).¹² There's a very good reason that companies like Tesla maintain such a strong presence in China: to take advantage of this cheap, plentiful, and replaceable labor force as closely as possible to the carefully controlled supply of precious cobalt.

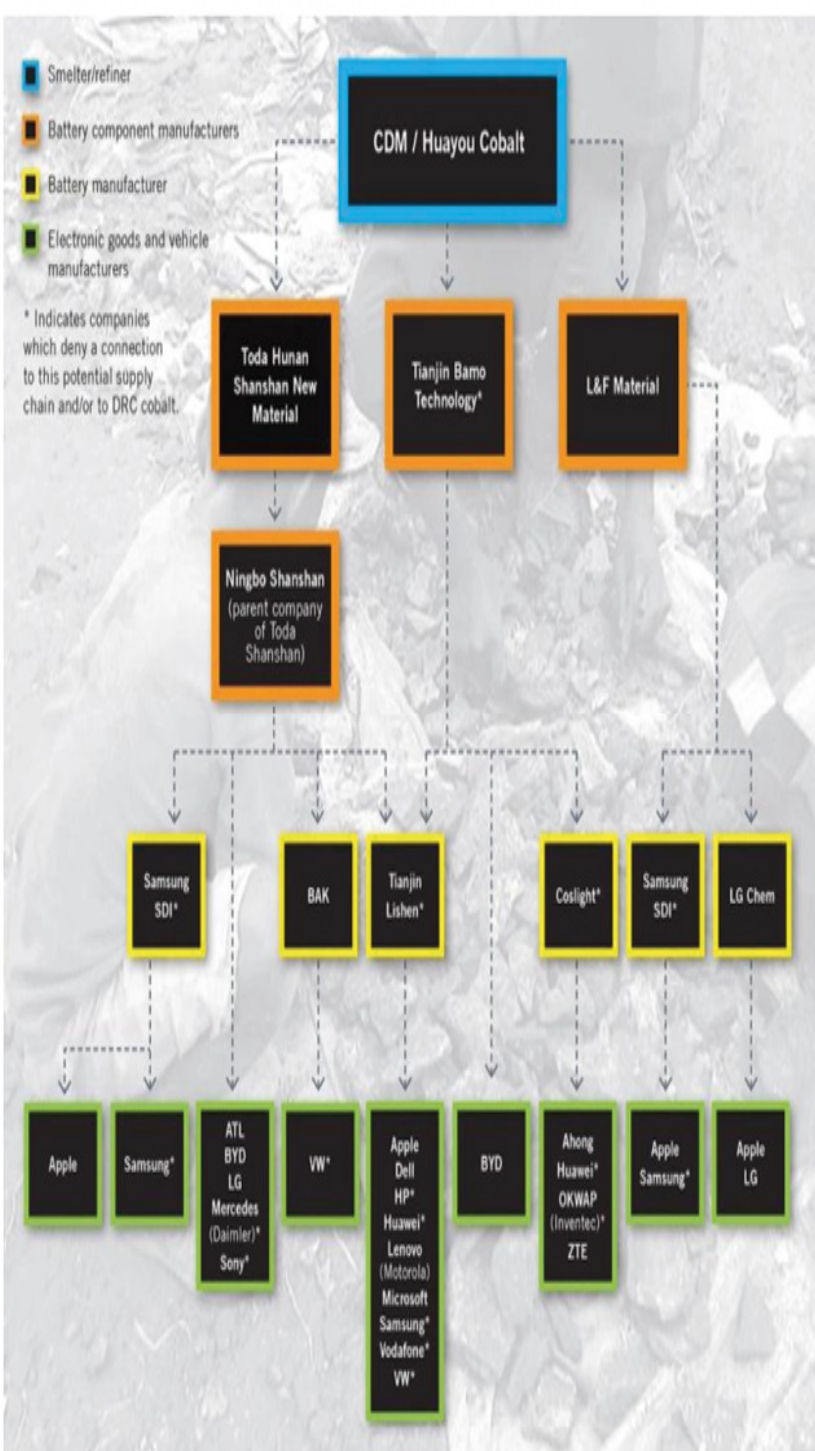


Figure 5.9. (Amnesty International, 2016) *The Cobalt Supply Chain*.

Yet the problems with slavery and cobalt start much, much earlier in the chain: right

at the very beginning as the element is pulled from the ground. Mining for cobalt is incredibly dangerous, especially for the child laborers who frequently find themselves forced to work in the toxic pits. Exposure to cobalt dust – which can be both inhaled and absorbed through the skin – causes numerous adverse health effects such as a lethal respiratory disease known merely as “hard metal lung disease,” deafness, seizures, chronic skin problems, asthma, cancer, birth defects, and heart, thyroid, liver, and kidney disease (Amnesty International, 2016a; Wahlqvist, et al., 2020; Kara, 2023; Smith, 2023). Workers in the DRC’s cobalt mines – who, again, consist of many children – are not afforded any protective gear during their 12 to 24-hour long shifts in the mines, which are poorly ventilated and perilously reinforced. Between September 2014 and December 2015, shaft collapses and other fatal accidents took the lives of *at least* 80 miners in a single southern province in the DRC, although the real fatality count was likely much higher due to most deaths and accidents going unreported (Amnesty International, 2016a).



Figure 5.10. (Amnesty International, 2017) *Worldwide Flow of Cobalt*



Figure 5.11. (Adobe Stock) *Child laborers mining cobalt ore.* Children as young as seven work in mines in dangerous conditions. Cobalt is highly toxic and can be absorbed through the skin. Note the lack of any protective gear. .

The children who labor in these mines are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Sexual assault and abuse are common, and women and girls tend to work together in groups to protect themselves as much as possible (Kara, 2023). Of course, as any survivor knows, this does not stop a rapist from raping if he is simply determined enough. Security guards beat these workers on a frequent basis for “trespassing” on competing land claims or for not paying “protection fees” into exhortative rackets, which eat into the precious little amount that the miners are paid to survive on. For their exhaustive efforts, most child laborers earn as little as a dollar a day, and must make ends meet on this amount alone after paying guards for “protection” and other expenses (Amnesty International, 2016a; Kara, 2023). Conditions are so atrocious that mothers have been known to pray for their children to die out of mercy, with one mother on the record as saying, “I thank God for taking my babies. Here it is better not to be born.” (Boyle, 2023)



Figure 5.12. (Goldendrum.com, n.d.; Amnesty International) *"Here it is better not to be born."* Even mothers with newborn infants are not allowed reprieve; they are forced to take their newborn children with them into the toxic pits and continue working if they hope to survive.



Figure 5.13. (The Sun, 2022) *The perfection of the slave farm.*

One can easily be forgiven for not knowing the racial demographics of the trafficked

population, either globally or in America, thanks in large part to some of those who seem to express the most concern about trafficking itself. If one recalls the second chapter, many of the conspiracy theories that gave rise to the larger QAnon phenomenon originated in neo-Nazi literature and fan sites. In 2020, those behind the movement hijacked the name of the Save the Children Foundation, a notable London-based charity that has operated for well over a hundred years in disaster zones worldwide, to launch a global disinformation campaign centering around the claims of child trafficking pervasive in the pedophile-obsessed crusade (Bloom, 2021). Yet, usurping the *Save the Children* tagline wasn't the end of QAnon's gross distortions of the facts. While all the evidence to date shows that trafficking disproportionately affects persons of color – with child sex trafficking disproportionately affecting children from the global south (AKA, non-White children; Bloom, 2021) – those inspired by actual, bona fide Nazis and rabid antisemites quite unsurprisingly had different ideas about who were the *real* victims.

Researcher Mia Bloom and her team catalogued 228 images used in the disinformation campaign, sifting through thousands of duplicates. Of these 228 images, a remarkable 183 portrayed White children – approximately 80% of all the images used in the disinformation campaign. Only 9 images (4%) featured either Black or Asian children, respectively. 12 images (5%) featured Latinx children, while 15 images (6.5%) featured White children alongside children of color, which were categorized as “mixed/diverse.”

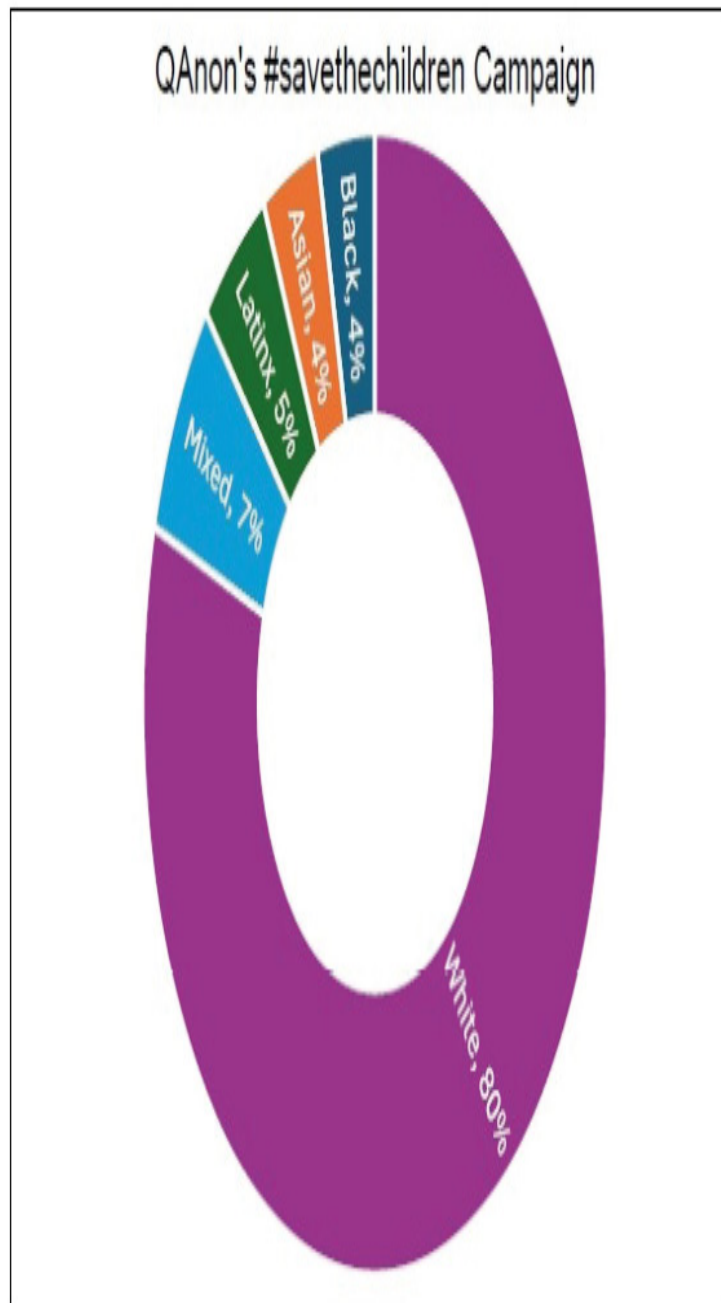


Figure 5.14. *Racial characteristics of children in images of QAnon #SaveTheChildren campaign, using data from Bloom, 2021.*

Clearly, one can see the narrative that was constructed and used by the QAnon

agents. Far from being representative of those who suffer the most from modern-day slavery, QAnon furthered old narratives of White victimhood that are predominant in the modern abolitionist movement (Woods, 2014). However, QAnon took this approach a step further, pushing the issue of race in human trafficking to the level of a military psychological operation. It should come as no surprise to the reader that many “activists” and do-gooders in the anti-trafficking movement swallowed the falsehood hook, line, and sinker and in turn ran with it, causing irreparable harm to efforts to eradicate actual slavery worldwide.

The White/Caucasian Population

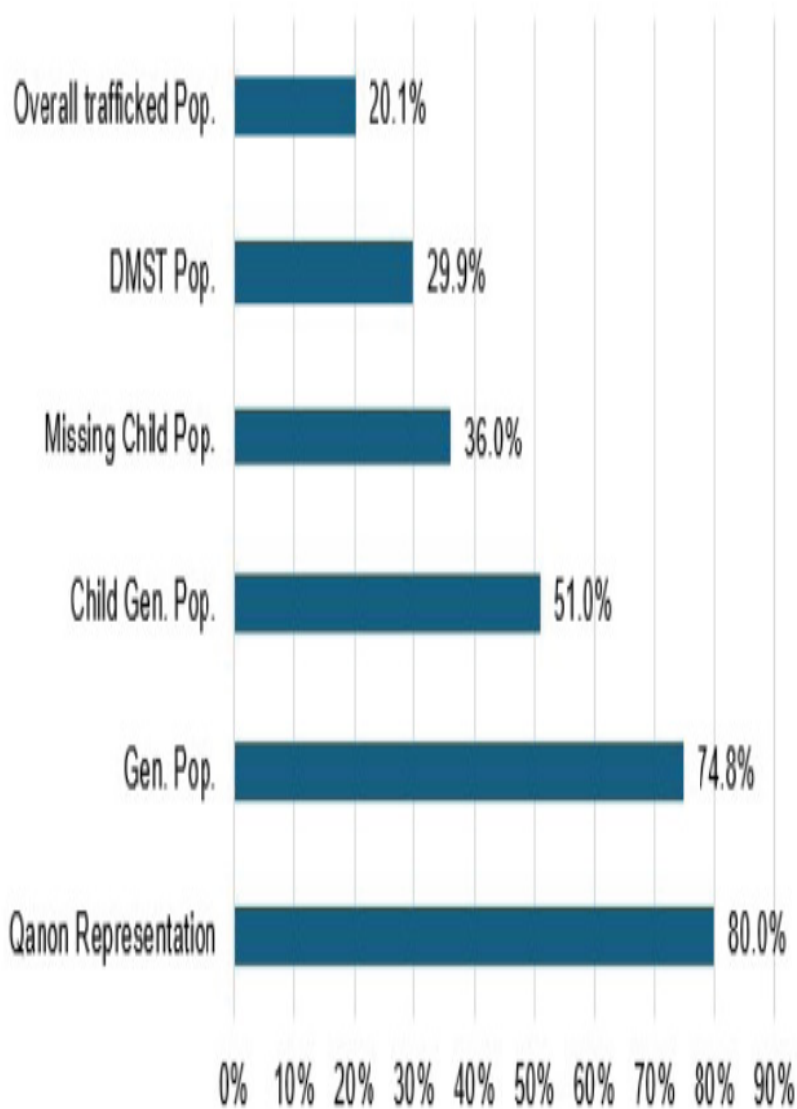


Figure 5.15. (Zarnowski, 2023) *The Qanon Trafficking Psy-Op.*

Let's go back for a moment and consider the case of the Congolese mother who lost her children, since there is something that is important to understand as it pertains to vulnerabilities. I refer to the role that pregnancy, childbirth, and the need to provide childcare pose as unique gender vulnerabilities that predispose women to trafficking, as well as the way that the resulting effects predispose their children and future generations to also experience trafficking. Admittedly, this is a multifaceted and complicated matter; lest the reader feel that I am drifting too far afield and that the implications for slavery are not apparent, they will become so in the material that follows.

Pregnancy and childbirth are dangerous endeavors for both mother and child (Marshall, 2021). For nine months, pregnant women are rendered particularly susceptible to their environment due to their unique role in the human reproductive process. Even with the advances that come with modern medical science, the potential lives these mothers are carrying face an even more uncertain fate: up to 26% of, or over one in four, pregnancies end in miscarriage (Dugas & Slane, 2022; see also Freidenfelds, 2020). A miscarriage can be devastating for the mother, with the resulting trauma lasting for years – and that is, of course, if the mother survives the miscarriage in the first place (Nyas, Kolikonda, & Lippmann, 2015). Anything from life-threatening infection to fatal bleeding can occur, and miscarriages are only one way that a pregnancy can turn fatal for an expectant mother (Dugas & Slane, 2022). Childbirth presents its own set of potentially lethal consequences for both mother and child that male members of *homo sapiens* are otherwise never threatened by.

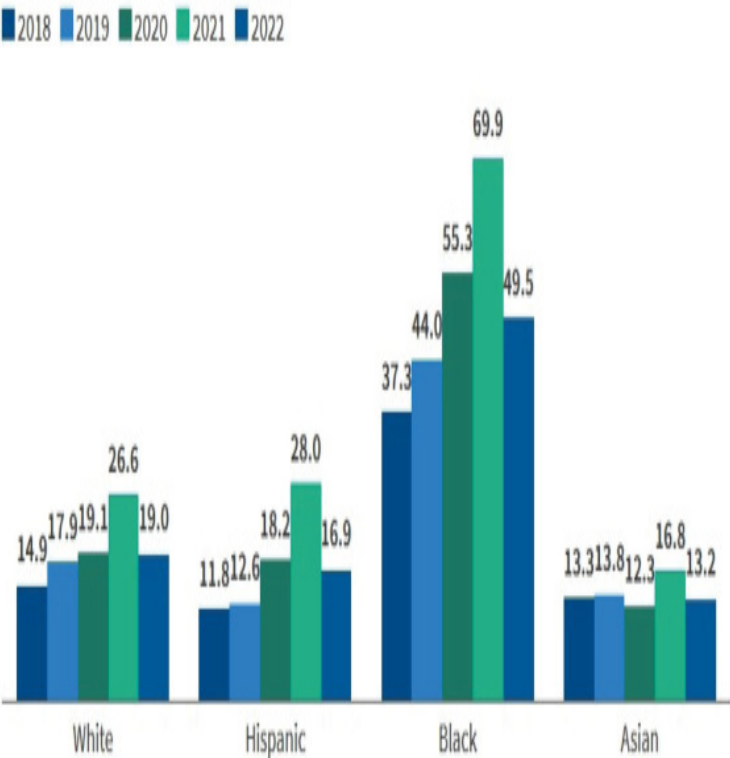
This creates a unique and gendered vulnerability to trafficking and other related abuses that arise from what is otherwise a purely evolutionary biological adaptive mechanism. The course of human evolution selected mechanisms that were the fittest solutions to the survival challenges human beings faced over the collective eons – solutions that don't necessarily fit well into the ways humans have organized themselves into societies for the past few thousand or so years. In biology, these are called **maladaptive traits**. The phenomenon of pareidolia introduced in the second chapter is an example of such a trait, and the flightless dodo is an even more classic example of a being possessing maladaptive traits. Thousands of years of evolution adapted this bird to a life without ground predators, and as such it evolved traits that deprived it of the ability to fly. Humans then landed on its remote island and began hunting it for food as it was quite easy to do so – the bird couldn't fly away, and its nests were similarly easy pickings for the scavengers that humans brought along with them, such as rats, dogs, and pigs.

Now for the record, the author is hardly comparing women to helpless, hilariously pathetic birds that went the way of the dinosaur – he values his life far too much to do such a thing. Rather, the takeaway is that there is an innate biological component to this problem – one that is exacerbated when patriarchal norms and rampant sexism, AKA modern human society, gets added to the mix. At the fundamental level, infant and maternal mortality, and the resulting need to provide routine care for children, can help us better understand the feminized (and racialized) nature of slavery.

To understand the significance of this, recall that 44% of all trafficking victims had children during their exploitation, with 35% of victims having children with their trafficker (Polaris, 2023). Additionally, as has been discussed before, vulnerabilities tend to intersect and overlap, such as with misogynoir. Such overlapping forms of

discrimination and prejudices compound the effects of each layer, resulting in Black women experiencing the greatest form of discrimination and stressors across the spectrum as examined to date, especially in health-related outcomes (Perry, Harp, & Oser, 2013). Keep in mind, of course, that Black women account for the single largest trafficked population in America, and poverty only compounds the issues explored here, revealing yet another intersecting vulnerability (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011; Polaris, 2023). According to conventional wisdom, great advancements in medical care over the past century have drastically reduced both the infant and maternal mortality rate (Miller, Kliff, and Buchanan, 2023). Additionally, the richer a person is, the better medical treatment that they can afford, even in the United States – which, while among developed nations, isn't regarded as having the greatest healthcare system in the world. Thus, the overwhelming disparities that can be seen among mothers are quite revealing.

Maternal Mortality per 100,000 Births by Race and Ethnicity, 2018-2022



Note: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic for this analysis; other groups are non-Hispanic. Other races are not shown due to small numbers. Maternal deaths are defined as deaths that occur while pregnant or within 42 days of being pregnant.

Source: Hoyert DL. Maternal mortality rates in the United States, 2022. NCHS Health E-Stats. 2024. • Get the data • Download PNG

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Figure 5.16. (Hill, Rao, Artiga, and Ranji, 2024) *Racial Disparities in Maternal Mortality.* From 2018 through 2022 Black women consistently experienced the highest maternal mortality rate across racial and ethnic groups and also had the greatest increase during the pandemic.

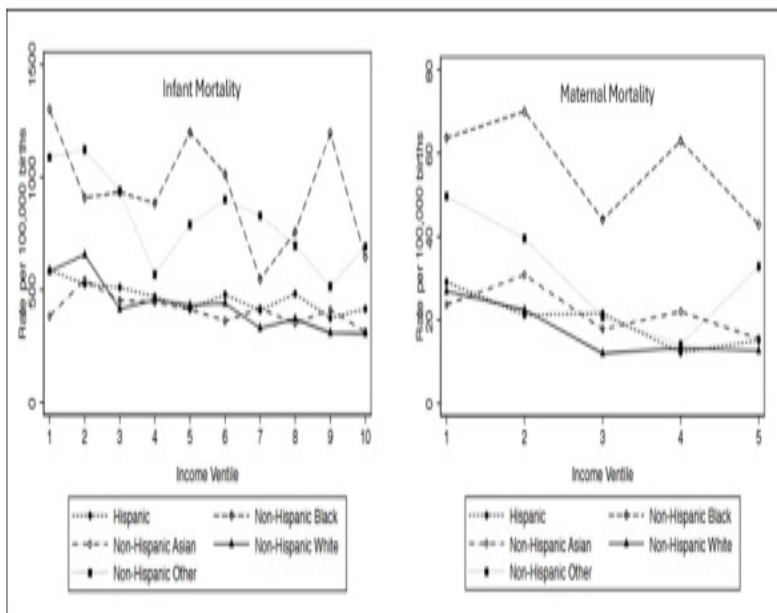


Figure 5.17. (Kennedy-Moulton, et al., 2023) *Racial and economic disparities in infant and maternal mortality.* As incomes increase (left to right) both infant and maternal mortalities tend to decrease. The American medical system can save the lives of many infants with early health risks, but these benefits may be out of reach for those with limited income. This study also showed that low and high-income women are equally likely to have risky pregnancies, but low-income women are three times as likely to die from these pregnancies, even in the same hospital. Both infant and maternal mortality rates among the richest Black women and the poorest White women are roughly equivalent. Additional research cited in this study revealed that Indigenous populations face infant and maternal mortality rates near that of Black women in childbirth. Income serves as a mitigating factor for childbirth complications for White, Hispanic, and Asian populations, but not for Black or Indigenous ones.

These and similar studies reveal that, *even before they exit the womb*, Black and

Indigenous persons are predisposed to experiencing tougher lives than their peers because of the environments their mothers were exposed to. This is known as **generational trauma**. Much to the point under review, generational trauma can predispose one to later experiencing trafficking, especially if the necessary postpartum support is not in place for either mother or child. And while national trends can reveal the larger issue, one needs to carefully examine the data at a more regional, state-by-state level to truly see the importance of such support in protecting both mothers and children.

Let's examine the Lone Star State, for instance. A disturbing 90% of pregnancy-related deaths in Texas are considered preventable according to the state's Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (Vohra-Gupta & White, 2023). This is much higher than the average nationally or in similar states, and a great many of these deaths – as well as non-fatal, severe complications – occur in the Black communities of Texas and among the uninsured. Texas unsurprisingly has the highest rate of uninsured residents since Texas legislators did not expand Medicaid in the wake of passage of the Affordable Care Act, causing Medicaid benefits for pregnant women to expire a mere sixty days after delivery. More than one in four pregnancy-related deaths occur between this sixty-day cutoff and twelve months after delivery, revealing the human cost of political calculations (Vohra-Gupta & White, 2023). Discrimination in the state also accounted for an additional 12% of pregnancy-related deaths. However, the leading cause of pregnancy-related death in Texas in 2019, hemorrhage from ruptured ectopic pregnancies, is expected to greatly increase in number due to the state's criminalization of abortion in 2021 and 2022 (Vohra-Gupta & White, 2023).

At first, this all may seem unrelated to the issue of human trafficking.¹³ Yet the issue of human trafficking, as we saw with the examples of QAnon and its various incarnations, has been repeatedly hijacked to serve other political agendas, and efforts to outlaw abortion are no different. Abortion politics have repeatedly torpedoed anti-trafficking legislation in recent years. In 2015 a mechanism to provide care for survivors of human trafficking failed to pass the Senate when it was discovered that the Republican sponsors of the bill had surreptitiously inserted language to prevent the funds from being used for abortion services (Everett & Kim, 2015). In 2011, the TVPA itself was allowed to expire due to a row over the similar provision of funds for abortion services to trafficking survivors (Bewley, 2014).

In a similar vein, Patrina Mosley wrote in *The Federalist* that abortion and sex trafficking are undeniably linked (Mosley, 2020). Citing the unusually high number of abortions that sex trafficked women undergo, Mosley argued that sex trafficking victims are forced or otherwise coerced to endure abortions by their traffickers so as to maximize profits. She took the further step of asserting – without a single speck of evidence – that abortion providers were in on the ruse alongside the traffickers, and even shared in the profits that this nefarious alliance somehow generated. Mosley specifically singled out Planned Parenthood, which she accused of “aiding and abetting” sex trafficking in the typical ruse of a person who is “just asking questions” (Mosley, 2020). It shouldn't surprise the reader to learn that at the time of her writing, Mosley served as the Family Research Council's Director of Life, Culture, and Women's Advocacy.

Ironically, and in direct contradiction to Mosley's highly questionable point, Focus on the Family has touted crisis pregnancy centers as solutions to the trafficking issue by

highlighting the important point that traffickers use pregnancy and the resulting child as a form of **coercive control**, or a pattern of behaviors that create an unequal power dynamic in a relationship, power over the mother (Pitzer, 2021). Such centers, Focus on the Family argues, are perfectly situated to intercept and identify victims who have been made pregnant by traffickers. To this end, Focus on the Family makes a really strong point that is often overlooked in the literature and in trainings: healthcare providers are uniquely positioned to identify slavery victims while they are still under their captor's influence, thus greatly reducing the time a person is trafficked (Dovydaitis, 2010).

However, it must be understood that crisis pregnancy centers are *not* healthcare centers; rather, they are mere ideological trojan horses masquerading as such, doing everything in their power to talk women out of procuring an abortion regardless of the potential consequences (Borrero, Frietsche, and Dehlendorf, 2019; see also Fowler, 2023; Rinkunas, 2023). This is the crisis pregnancy center's ultimate goal, *not* the prevention of human trafficking: if they are successful in their goal, the abusive mechanism in a coercive control scheme (the potential child) remains in place, keeping the woman trapped in a trafficking situation. Which... wait, what was Focus on the Family's argument again? And if healthcare workers are the solution to ending human trafficking, as Focus on the Family (quite appropriately) alleges, why does the organization maintain such opposition to women having free, unfettered access to the trained medical staff such as that found at abortion providers?

Or is this, as we have seen before, not really about human trafficking at all?

Indeed, slavery has been invoked to justify even the harshest abortion bans, such as Florida's which prohibits abortions after 15 weeks – even in cases of rape, incest, and sex trafficking. In a truly Orwellian twist, Florida Republican State Senator Ileana Garcia argued that banning abortion would *help* sex trafficking victims, stating,

When the girl or the woman gets pregnant, and they can't make her get an abortion or she doesn't want to get an abortion or they can't get her to a place to get an abortion, they don't use her anymore. So they release her from the human trafficking ring. That is why we went to that point.¹⁴

Of course, the only problem with this argument is what Focus on the Family itself pointed out: *it doesn't work that way*.

Garcia's argument requires one to adopt a naïve, simplistic view of trafficking in order to make sense. Reality, of course, is far more complicated. **Reproductive coercion**, which itself is a form of coercive control, are behaviors that are exerted over a person's reproductive choices in order to control that person; such tactics include both forced or coerced abortion, as Mosley correctly noted, *as well as* forced continuation of a pregnancy or forced impregnation against one's will (Maine Coalition Against Domestic Violence). The irony here must be noted: these aforementioned individuals who are decrying traffickers' brutal reproductive coercion are at the same time *engaging* in reproductive coercion – such similarities are more than passing, but are beyond the scope of this particular volume.¹⁵ Much to this point, Freedom Network USA recommends that describing and offering all available reproductive healthcare options without bias or judgement to pregnant sex trafficking survivors helps to rebuild their sense of self-determination, which allows them to regain a sense of agency. Personal agency, it must be understood, is essential to preventing future abuses (Freedom Network USA, 2015). Garcia's claims about abortion bans being part of the solution to

the issue of slavery are, at best, false and far more likely serve to merely tokenize victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking as mere political pawns for the aims of the anti-abortion movement (Kolick, 2022; see also Ross, 2023).

That being said, abortion and human trafficking *are* related – just not in the way Garcia, Mosley, or others necessarily want them to be.

Far from it, in fact.

However, it is worth pausing to make one thing absolutely crystal clear: I am not in any way accusing Garcia, et al. of *malice*. That's not how any of this works, and the true problem lies much, much deeper within human cognition. I'm not even accusing these individuals so much of intellectual laziness considering that I am not privy to their thought process or life experiences. Rather, they are merely *human*, and subject to confirmation bias and tribalistic thinking as much as anyone else. The shortcomings of their arguments are thus reflective of this aspect of human nature and the ridiculously complex and intricate phenomena that have driven slavery throughout history: phenomena that we are only now beginning to understand.

To better understand this connection I just described, one must examine the fundamental nature of power and control in human trafficking dynamics so as to understand how victims are coerced. The psychology and finer mechanics of coercive control will be addressed in great depth in a later volume, as will the mindset and methodology of abusers and traffickers. But for the reader's benefit it is worth examining *now* the myriad ways that power imbalances can arise in relationships. While one might generally think of such imbalances arising in romantic relations, power imbalances can actually occur in any relationship, such as in labor trafficking, where a power imbalance arises between an employer and an employee. Taking findings from research in domestic and sexual violence, forms of violence that are related to and often go hand-in-hand with slavery, Polaris converted the widely known Power and Control wheel for application to human trafficking scenarios (Polaris Project, 2010). What is key for the reader to understand here, and this is quite an important point, is that any inequality between two parties can set the stage for abuse. Moreover, unequal social norms, values, or power structures can and do prevent individuals from seeking care and protections that they are wholly and legally entitled to (Umubyeyi, Persson, Morgren, and Krantz, 2016). Thus, merely passing laws that legislate equality doesn't really solve anything: the underlying structure of society and culture must also change in order for these laws to have their desired effect.

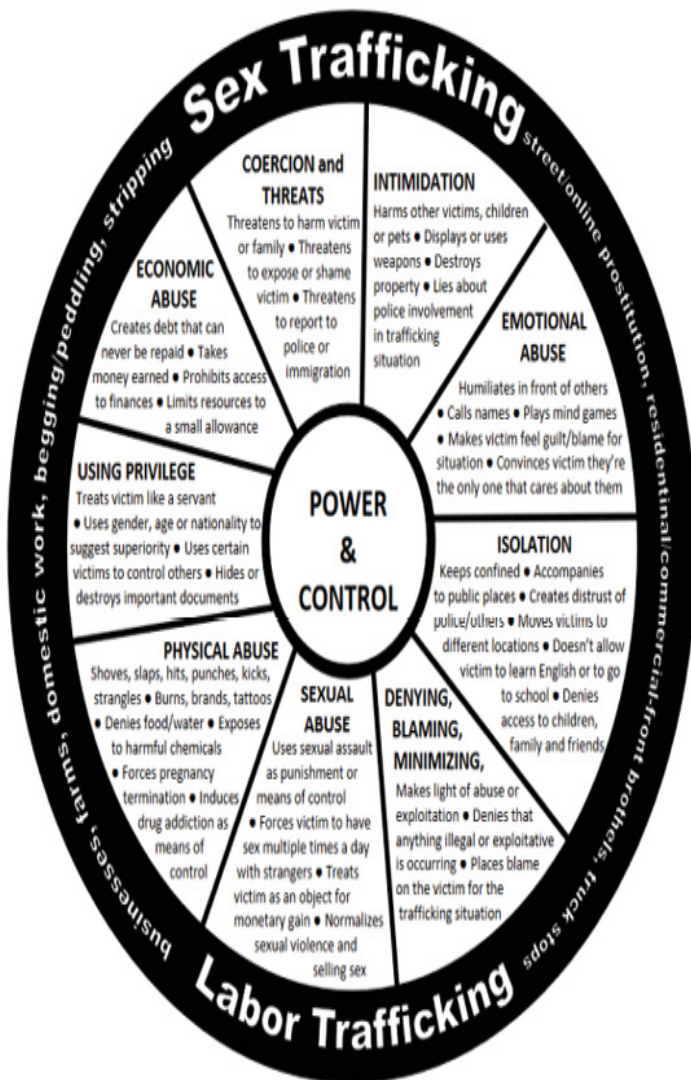


Figure 5.18. (Polaris Project, 2010). *Power and control in human trafficking.* This power and control wheel as applied to human trafficking was adopted from a similar diagram used in domestic violence. The two phenomena are not so much distinct phenomena as they are two sides of the same coin, a fact that the origin of this wheel further illustrates.

A short case study may help illustrate the implications of these power and control

dynamics. While working for an anti-domestic violence organization, the author once had a client we'll call J. J had been horrifically abused all her life, even as a child, but I met her as she fled her soon-to-be ex-husband, bringing her two very young children with her. Her husband had repeatedly kidnapped the two children and held them essentially as hostages, compelling her to stay with him for the sake of keeping them safe. He was horribly abusive, and even kidnapped the children at one point and moved them across the country to isolate and punish J for having left him.

J was in a shelter for a time, but that itself was a terrifying experience for her. At one point a male client slipped her date rape drugs, after which the shelter staff reported her to CPS for "driving while intoxicated" during her flight from him and his friends. The male client who slipped her the drug was, for some reason, not reprimanded. (In a twist that was not all that unexpected, he later set fire to the shelter building.) That incident was later used by the shelter coordinator as an excuse to kick J out of the shelter after she had a particularly violent run-in with her ex. The coordinator also claimed that the shelter was full despite a plethora of beds and rooms being available.¹⁶ Far from always being the compassionate, affable bundles of warmth that they are portrayed as being in TV and movies, some workers in service organizations have little or no professional training and are capable of abusing their authority while still virtue-signaling how much they really care.¹⁷

We worked very hard to get J back on her feet, and finally – not due to any of the "services" of the agency she was with at the time – managed to get her into an apartment of her own and we could see that she had come a long way and was doing better. Her ex once again took the kids and refused to return them to her, despite her having sole custody. (This was technically an instance of kidnapping that she reported to the local sheriff's office, to which the officers responded by threatening to arrest her if she ever complained to them again about it, since they viewed it as a "custody issue"). Upon the children's eventual return thanks to one very angry judge, they too finally began shedding the signs of the significant trauma they had endured at the hands of their father.

J and her children were finally safe. Then J met P. Slowly, I began losing contact with her as she refused to return messages. The problem, you see, was that I, like P, was a man, and P didn't like J speaking to other men. She had the same problem with her psychiatrist, whom she had to stop seeing for the same reason. She removed all the photos on her Instagram, because P didn't like her being looked at by other men. But slowly, over a period of many months, I convinced her that she needed to leave. She knew she was being abused again, that her *kids* were being abused again, and that only she had the power to change their situation. She was ready to leave P the following weekend. I confirmed that a local, more reputable shelter had a room for her, and they were holding it for her along with the supplies her children needed.

Then I got her text: she was pregnant.

The child was P's, and suddenly, in the blink of an eye, everything changed for her once again. I didn't even raise the issue of abortion, but she did, expressing that she didn't want to have an abortion, but with no income, two (and soon to be three) kids to feed, and unable to work because of the pregnancy, she didn't feel she could leave P now. And of course, P was so happy about the new baby and promised to change. He would never strike her or yell at her again, he said. Things would be so much better once

the baby came. Of course, she still hit her, and she still cried every day, for which she hit her *even more*. Slowly, she stopped updating me, until one day I saw on her Instagram that she'd had a baby girl. Of course, this notification was a text-only post. P still didn't permit her to show herself on camera; other men might *look* at her, after all.

Eventually, she stopped posting altogether, until one day I could no longer find her account. She had deleted it, having been forced from public view by the father of her child.

Power and control. J's husband and her subsequent partner, but also shelter staff and law enforcement, all asserted control over J, contributing to her dire situation and setting the stage for what could be a dismal future for her children.

To this day, I don't know what happened to J. *I don't even know if she's alive*. I hope she is; I hope that she got out, and is happily rebuilding her life with her children somewhere, safe from the kind of exploitation she had experienced ever since she was a child. However, I still monitor the newspaper from her last known location for the obituaries, since I know how these cases all too often end. Every week, on Sundays at around ten o'clock in the morning, I hold my breath, praying to whatever gods may exist that I won't be attending yet another funeral. So far, I've been fortunate; I really hope she has been too, and has found an exit from her situation. Then again, maybe I have overlooked something, an article somewhere or a funerary, either unintentionally or because I simply didn't want to face reality: a thought that keeps me up at night more than I care to admit.

There is much to take in with this case. The most glaring issues are the gross, malicious, and absolutely damning failures of social services and law enforcement. These failures are far more commonplace than most might realize, and they represent a total failure of the systems that are meant to protect the most vulnerable among us. We failed J, *I* failed J, and society fails people like J on a daily basis. There really is no safety net for people who fall behind as much as there are a few loose strings strung together in a very haphazard manner, often crewed by people who don't have the resources or who just don't care enough to give people in real crisis something to cling on to. From this, we can learn something deeply profound about vulnerabilities and their role in driving slavery: once a person becomes vulnerable to exploitation, it is really, *really* hard for them to ever be safe again because the systems in place tend to *keep* people vulnerable. There are countless ways to actually help people, but the "system" isn't one of them.

Of relevance to this specific discussion, however, is how my greatest failure of a case highlights matters of reproductive coercion, pregnancy, and access to abortion: and how these issues, in turn, predispose individuals to experience trafficking and continued trafficking. Make no mistake, this is *not* a case of mere domestic violence: this is also a case of coercive control and human trafficking. Domestic violence and slavery are merely two sides of the same coin and frequently go hand-in-hand. For now, what is important to digest is the awful reality that even among the best-funded, survivor-focused anti-trafficking organizations, the unique physical and psychological impact that pregnancy and parenthood have on trafficking victims and their subsequent needs result in said survivors being "systematically overlooked" by anti-slavery responses (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, 2016).

Here's where this all becomes significant to our discussion, and it again involves the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities (see Macahon, 2022). In the United States, the

abortion rate for Black women is nearly five times that of White women (approximately 40% of all abortions, per Lenzen, 2022), with the abortion rate of Hispanic women being twice that of White women. While some have argued that this is a matter of racial eugenics, such arguments fail to consider the socioeconomic factors that lead women to procure abortions, such as a fundamental, racially disparate lack of resources to provide for children in the first place – which can be argued as the real form of eugenics present in the issue (Cohen, 2008; Fuentes, 2023). Hispanic women have a higher rate of unintentional pregnancy than White women, and Black women have the highest unintentional pregnancy rate of all, reflecting the difficulty these populations have with accessing affordable birth control, as well as general healthcare. (Cohen, 2008 argues that these disparities must be understood in a wider context of gross health disparities and disparate outcomes, from cancer, diabetes, and heart disease rates to STD infection rates). Of course, the top reason for procuring an abortion, it must be understood, is an unplanned pregnancy (Cohen, 2008).

Further, Black and Indigenous women suffer from pregnancy-related deaths at three and two times the rates of White women, respectively (Troost, et al., 2022; see also Lenzen, 2022; National Partnership for Women and Families, 2018). Following the 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, these racial disparities became even worse (Fuentes, 2023). As Black women face higher teen pregnancy and maternal mortality rates, this particular population bears the brunt of criminalized abortion, with maternal mortality and poverty rates expected to increase 30% and 20% of their *Roe* levels as a direct result of the *Dobbs* decision (Lenzen, 2022). Indigenous women too have faced dire outcomes from this decision, with already remote clinics and healthcare options suddenly becoming hundreds of miles further away, and with no means of transportation available to reach them (Ungar & Hollingsworth, 2023). Of course, such drastic maternal health outcomes were always predicted to come with such a ruling, as a 2021 study confirmed that a national abortion ban would increase overall maternal mortality by 21% and maternal mortality among Black women by 33% (Marshall, 2021). Thus, it becomes clear that abortion politics can be understood as a form of “drained-pool politics”: yes, it hurts the White population, but it hurts the Black/minority population *even more* (McGhee, 2021; see also Metzl, 2020).¹⁸ Efforts to criminalize abortion, then, can be better understood not merely as gendered violence against women, as the issue is commonly framed by women's rights activists, but also as an extremely *racialized* form of violence (Beisel & Kay, 2004; Ross; Shimron, 2021).

To this end, it must be understood that the deadliest forms of violence are not those which are active in methodology but those which are bureaucratic to the point of banality (Arendt, 2006). To kill, death squads require a steady supply of bullets and other critical logistics to merely even function. They can be starved in any number of ways, and quite easily so. Similarly, the problem of a death squad can be fixed with a single, well-placed bomb, grenade, or volley of gunfire. Systems, on the other hand, merely require a distinct *lack* of resources to kill *en masse* – and they are not nearly as easy a problem to fix.

This insight would be damning enough on its own, but we have yet to truly explore the downstream effects of these dynamics on women and children and how they fundamentally drive human trafficking. Rape, pregnancy, reproductive coercion, and rape-related pregnancy (RRP) go hand in hand with many forms of slavery, including

forced marriage, sex trafficking, child marriage, and more. Women who were raped by an intimate partner were more likely to experience RRP (26%) than those who were raped by an acquaintance (5.2%) or a stranger (6.9%; Division of Violence Prevention, 2020; Basile, et al., 2018). Of those women who reported rape at the hands of an intimate partner¹⁹, 30% reported that they had experienced reproductive coercion at the hand of the same partner, with 20% reporting that their partner tried to get them pregnant or stop them from using birth control without their consent; 23% reported that their partner refused to use a condom. Importantly, women who experienced RRP at the hands of an intimate partner experienced reproductive coercion at a rate statistically more significant than women who were raped by an intimate partner but did not become pregnant (Basile, et al., 2018).

The takeaway from these findings is this: women's ability to become pregnant is a vulnerability that traffickers and abusers exploit so that they can, in turn, exercise more control over their victim (National Domestic Violence Hotline; Forrestal, 2022; see also Rebecca Bender Initiative, 2017; Law, 2023). This is done by turning the child into an **abusive mechanism**. By threatening or harming the child, they can, in turn, abuse and control the mother of the child (National Domestic Violence Hotline). Examples abound: in one case, a trafficking victim was raped and impregnated by her trafficker, who then threatened to take her kids away from her if she reported his violence against her to authorities (Law, 2023). Rebecca Bender, founder of the Rebecca Bender Initiative and a sex trafficking survivor, has spoken at length of how her trafficker would refuse to feed her daughter or even kick her out of the house if she didn't bring in enough money from buyers he forced Rebecca to have sex with (Rebecca Bender Initiative, 2017).

The Road to Hell

Thus, we can see the truly sinister nature of power and control in trafficking and enslavement, as well as the insidious nature of Garcia et al.'s politicization of trafficking to serve their anti-abortion agenda: far from helping victims escape their traffickers, having children binds victims to their traffickers and makes them even more dependent upon them (Forrestal, 2022; Macahon, 2022). Having children with an abuser or trafficker makes it much more difficult to become economically independent and nearly impossible to become legally independent from one's trafficker – a fact that predators know and exploit. The *Dobbs* decision and arguments in favor of fetal personhood have only aided these perpetrators in their efforts to control and manipulate their victims: predators can now file lawsuits against their victims (or those who aid victims) who chose to have an abortion (Stuart, 2022; see also Associated Press, 2023). Texas saw an estimated 26,313 RRP in the first sixteen months alone after the state outlawed all abortions (Dickman, et al., 2024).

Being tethered to an abuser in such a way leads to a vicious cycle of compounding harms and lasting generational traumas. This comes into particular focus where the dynamics of sex trafficking are concerned, with sex buyers often paying extra for "raw" sex, AKA sex without a condom. Given this high level of reproductive coercion, a remarkable 71% of trafficking victims reported at least one pregnancy during their time of exploitation, with 21% reporting five or more pregnancies (Lederer & Wetzels, 2014). The vast majority of these survivors reported that their pregnancies were caused by their trafficker. Likewise, in the largest survey of survivors conducted to date, 30% of those

with children reported having children prior to their trafficking, 44% reported having children while being trafficked, and 35% reported having children with their trafficker (Polaris, 2023). This harm gets compounded when combined with rape, which occurs in up to approximately 66% of all abusive relationships (Knecht, 2017). Again, as per Basile et al., 2018, RRP is four times as likely when the perpetrator is a current or former partner as compared to a stranger or acquaintance, a dynamic that is absolutely critical to understand when considering the individual whom the typical prostitute references when referring to her “boyfriend.” The overlapping nature of domestic violence and sex trafficking again becomes all the more apparent when this data is considered, especially when one realizes that four of the states with some of the most restrictive abortion measures in place also have laws on the books that prevent pregnant women from obtaining a divorce – even in cases of domestic violence and sex trafficking, thereby keeping victim and perpetrator wed and thus legally bound (Thurrott, 2022; Rousseau, 2024).²⁰

Once pregnant, the danger for a victim in such a situation increases dramatically. Pregnant women or those who have recently given birth are twice as likely to die by homicide than by any other cause of maternal mortality (Maeve, et al., 2021). The murderers are most often the current or former intimate partner, and most often the murder is committed with a firearm (Cheng & Horon, 2010). Black women, women under 25, and those who are unmarried are the most likely to be killed. Women with unplanned pregnancies or who become pregnant as adolescents (13-17) are at significantly increased risk of experiencing such multi-generationally traumatizing violence, with those in the former group experiencing violence at two to four times the rate of those with planned pregnancies (Krulwitch, et al., 2001). Pregnant minors also experience violence at much higher rates than their adult peers (Gazmarian, et al., 1996), and this doesn’t even consider the long-lasting effects that pregnancy itself has on adolescent bodies (Nolen, 2022). This not only poses obvious health and safety threats for the pregnant mother, but also for the child: babies of mothers who experience domestic violence in pregnancy exhibit structurally different brains than of those who do not (University of Bath, 2023).²¹

Adding yet another layer of intensification to the effects women experience from a dearth of reproductive and maternal healthcare is the problem of how abortion bans uniquely threaten abused and trafficked populations. In much the same way as the post-*Roe* landscape has enabled predators to harass their victims through the legal system, abortion bans likewise endanger women and enable their exploiters to enact potentially lethal control over them. Such bans can enable the forced reporting of RRP victims to law enforcement, destroying the victims’ ability to report and receive treatment/assistance anonymously free from the retaliation of their rapists (ABC News 4 Staff, 2022). The ability to report rape and receive help anonymously is of particular importance in cases of child sexual abuse, incest, and domestic violence, which as previously discussed, accounts for the overwhelming majority of all rape instances. Such mandatory reporting can likewise endanger sex trafficking victims, in particular victims of DMST, whom traffickers may kill in order to silence and avoid a lengthy prison sentence (Ross, 2023).

A common refrain from anti-abortion activists is that women who receive abortions frequently regret their decision. This is a line that crisis pregnancy centers often use to

coerce women into not having an abortion. A 2020 study examining this claim stated that, “we found no evidence of emerging negative emotions over five years post-abortion” (Rocca, et al., 2020). Relief, the researchers found, was the most common emotion experienced following an abortion. After one week, 97.5% of women believed they had made the right decision, with the number increasing to 99% at five years post-abortion. On the contrary, states that engage in so-called targeted regulation of abortion providers (AKA, TRAP laws) experience significantly higher rates of suicide among women aged 20-34 (Zandberg, Waller, Visoki, & Barzilay, 2023). The physical, psychological, and socioeconomic repercussions of being denied an abortion are not only well-documented, but potentially lethal for *both* mother and child, as extensively documented in the landmark Turnaway Study (Foster, 2021; see also Jacoby, 2023). A few of the stunning findings of the Turnaway Study were that being denied an abortion:

- was directly associated with far more serious health implications than having an abortion (see also Collins & Skarparis, 2020),
- leads to years of economic hardship and poverty,
- caused women to stay in contact with violent partners,
- made women more likely to raise children alone, and
- directly and adversely impacted the development, growth, and wellbeing of the child (Foster, 2021).

These findings deserve special attention, as they provide insight into how generational cycles of slavery and violence are perpetuated. If one follows the implications carefully, one can gain considerable insight into much of human history. These findings also factor directly into a particularly disturbing aspect of slavery that few like to think about: child abuse and crimes against children. As has been demonstrated previously, women who seek an abortion tend to experience domestic violence at rates significantly higher than the general population (Evins & Chescheir, 1996). However, 54.5% of these women self-reporting this history of violence also reported witnessing²² domestic violence in their family of origin, with 36.4% reporting that they were abused as a child.

This reflects the critical role of the family not as the necessarily safe and nurturing bedrock of human society that it is almost always portrayed as regardless of culture, but rather as exactly the opposite: a chief source of society’s greatest evils, and one of the reasons why we can’t quite seem to nip the problem of slavery in the bud. Families serve as a very effective means of transmitting a culture’s values to the next generation: it’s why they’re so universal to the human experience. If they weren’t so successful in this endeavor and hadn’t proven essential to the continuation of human life and society, they would have fallen by the evolutionary wayside as a result. Yet, as we have discussed previously, maladaptations can occur as environments change – and many values that were useful a hundred or a thousand years ago now serve only to hinder the human experience.

This brings us to the topic of incest and child sexual abuse (CSA), issues in which families play a critical role. Critically, access to abortion services significantly reduces neglect rates among children (Seiglie, 2004). This makes sense given what we have seen in the findings of the Turnaway Study. Studies have similarly found that the legalization of abortion notably reduced child abuse and neglect rates in the United States, including

by about 10% among all populations receiving social services (Bitler & Zavodny, 2004; see also Bitler & Zavodny 2002). However, Seiglie, 2004 also noted that such increased access to abortion was also significantly associated with child sexual abuse in particular. Again, this makes sense: child sexual abuse leads to pregnancy and the resulting need for abortion services (Boden, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2009).

If young and adolescent girls are not allowed access to abortion services, they can suffer extensive, long-term health consequences that their adult peers do not. Much to this point, adolescent girls do not even need to give birth to suffer these devastating adverse effects: mere pregnancy is enough to deal lifetime damage, if not to kill them outright (Nolen, 2022). Children who are victims of incest or who are in abusive situations face increased danger given that thirty-six states require parental involvement to procure an abortion, a frequent demand of the anti-abortion crowd (Rinkunas, 2022). Such mandated parental involvement also plays a significant role in the issue of child marriage, wherein the parents will force their pregnant daughter to marry a significantly older male rapist to avoid a criminal case against said rapist or to simply suit religious preferences (Saunt, 2023).

The socioeconomic impact on children that mothers are already raising or that are born from an unwanted pregnancy must also be considered for reasons that will become apparent in the following volumes. In one study these children experienced a significantly greater chance of growing up below the poverty line (72% compared to 55%) or living in a household without enough money to afford food, housing, and transportation (87% to 70%; Foster, 2018). Significant delays in achieving developmental milestones were observed in the children born to mothers denied an abortion as well. Adoption isn't always an option either, with nearly 90% of women denied an abortion choosing to raise the child rather than place the child up for adoption (and as we'll soon see, adoption brings its own set of consequences). Such women also reported poorer maternal bonding, with results such as resenting the newborn, feeling "trapped" as a mother, or longing for the "old days" before the child was born: results which obviously further negatively impacted the child's development (Foster, 2018).

The cognitive consequences are not just limited to the child. Mothers who have more than two children are at increased risk for enhanced cognitive decline in later life, such as with dementia (Bonsang & Skirbekk, 2022). One of the chief reasons for this is the financial burden that comes with having children, but increased stress is also a factor. Bonsang & Skirbekk, 2022 noted that there was a strong correlation between sleep deprivation, a leading factor behind late-life cognitive decline, and having three or more children, a fact that hardly took a scientific study to document. As mentioned previously, the financial consequences for a woman forced to bear a child against her will can be similarly devastating, reducing a previously stable financial situation to one of literal poverty for both her and the unwanted child (Miller, Wherry, & Foster, 2020). This in turn translates to a weaker economy when the microcosms of individual cases are considered collectively at the macro level. The results are so devastating that nearly two dozen economists warned that prohibiting abortion in Ohio following the *Dobbs* decision would dramatically reduce women's education attainment, workforce participation, and earnings in the state (Tebben, 2022). Much to these economists' point is the fact that states that maintained abortion access following the 2022 *Dobbs* decision have a significantly lower gender pay gap than do states that restricted abortion (O'Connell-

Domenec, 2022). This in turn reflects the larger truth underlying the politics of slavery, and the unique role of abortion politics in this dynamic: it's all about *power* and *control*.

Much to this point is how limiting access to abortion similarly limits access to other, unrelated forms of healthcare. If one wants to subjugate – or even *eradicate* – an entire population, then one of the first things to do so is to take away the population's access to healthcare (Safi, Anwari, & Safi, 2022; Mahase, 2023; Euromaidan Press, 2023). If one can't go to the hospital to seek aid, then one is much more likely to succumb to one's wounds when the bullets and shrapnel start flying. Moreover, such a population is innately vulnerable and much more dependent upon perceived charity. Cutting abortion access directly hinders access to reproductive and maternal healthcare, as attempts to block federal funding to abortion providers like Planned Parenthood have repeatedly shown. As federal funds already cannot be used to provide abortions courtesy of the 1977 Hyde Amendment, this has the direct and explicit effect of cutting services such as birth control, cancer screenings, and STI tests in an attempt to put the clinics completely out of business: all for the sin of spending an unremarkable 3% of their total budget providing abortion services (Potts, 2022; Kurtzleben, 2015). In context of Safi, Anwari, & Safi, 2022, Euromaidan Press, 2023 and Mahase, 2023, the allegory to a scorched earth, total war policy is even more apparent.

Abortion bans have the effect of hindering womens' access to lifesaving treatment and medications for a wide range of conditions ranging from devastating neurological conditions and cancer to arthritis, fibroids, and even ulcers (Shepherd & Sellers, 2022). As if this were not bad enough, these bans drive healthcare providers away, fearing that they will be on the receiving end of criminal charges pertaining to the bans. This has been strongly felt in Idaho, where a particularly restrictive abortion ban has forced a significant number of maternal care providers to relocate out of state, while also causing the already prohibitive cost of care to skyrocket, depriving nearly the entire population of healthcare for new and expecting mothers (Vagianos, 2023).

One year after the reversal of *Roe* by *Dobbs*, a number of telltale and tragically predictable impacts were reported. For starters it was found that, much like the strictest bans and the worst aspects of the gender pay gap, the harshest abortion bans also correlated almost perfectly with states that had the highest Black maternal death rates (Felix, 2023). Accompanying this was another dark, yet utterly foreseeable, discovery: *more people were dying*. The maternal mortality rate, as predicted, skyrocketed (Ottens, 2023; see also Marshall, 2021, Lenzen, 2022).²³

In a Kaiser Family Foundation report, OB-GYNs across the country reported that their ability to practice medicine within standards of care had suffered and that they had greater constraints on their ability to manage miscarriages and pregnancy-related emergencies (Fredericksen, Ranji, Gomez, & Salganicoff, 2023). Ironically, the number of OB-GYNs providing abortion services did not statistically change: as women's rights advocates had said all along, outlawing abortion doesn't make abortion go away, it just made pregnancy and childbirth much more dangerous to women, especially women of color. Given these findings, it should surprise no one that as of June 24, 2023, exactly one year following the *Dobbs* decision, the United States languished at number forty-three on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index, having dropped from number twenty-seven just the year prior, placing it right behind Colombia and Belarus (Wallace, 2023).

This doesn't even begin to cover how supposed "exceptions" to abortion bans rarely do what they claim to do, especially when it comes to saving the life of the mother or protecting victims of rape, incest, or sex trafficking (Gillman & Morton, 2023; Ross, 2023). As previously discussed, such exceptions can force the "outing" of these victims who might need anonymity to stay safe from their traffickers, and countless women have faced life-threatening and traumatizing complications from ectopic pregnancies, fatal fetal abnormalities, and other supposed "exceptions" only to be put in even more danger as hospitals and physicians consult lawyers to determine whether they can carry out their medical duty. This is a problem that is, unsurprisingly, worse for Black women (Harrigan-Farrelly, 2022). Some disabilities can even result in pregnancy serving as an effective death sentence for the mother (Vagianos, 2022). The eugenics implications of these findings are left as an exercise for the reader (see also Miller, Kliff, and Buchanan, 2023; Cohen, 2008). Much more, these findings are cross-cultural in nature and were well-documented prior to *Dobbs*, with Poland serving as an effective example of the direction in which the United States is heading following the overturning of *Roe* (Bennhold & Pronczuk, 2022).

Then there is perhaps the most surprising finding pertaining to our investigation into slavery: the impact that abortion access has on the crime rate. The legalization of abortion following *Roe* in 1973 led to some rather interesting consequences that are intricately connected to what we just discussed, including the increased poverty rate and developmental outcomes following women and families who are denied abortions. The *Roe* decision led to a significant drop in the crime rate in the 1990s as the generation born following *Roe* came of age (Levitt, 2005; Dubner, 2019). In 2001, the data suggested that the legalization of abortion, and thus the resulting ability of women to *choose* when to have children, would result in approximately 1% drop in crime per year for the next two decades (Donohue & Levitt, 2020).

These findings were, of course, extremely controversial politically and were highly criticized for what they implied – *especially* considering they specifically involved the years that saw the dawning of the age of mass incarceration.²⁴ Among the harshest criticisms leveled were that the original study stated the "obvious" while using "unnecessary and complicated jargon" to say what could otherwise be simply stated. Additionally, a small coding error was present which reduced the magnitude, but not the outcome, of the findings. Similarly, the homicide rate was the lone exception to the trend of decreased crime rates following *Roe* – even though the study's critics otherwise entirely replicated the study's findings. In academia, this overly banal and cumbersome process is more colloquially known as "nitpicking," and it's how one gets published and subsequently rehired for the coming year (Levitt, 2005; Joyce, 2004; Joyce, 2009; Joyce, 2010; Foote & Goetz, 2008).

The findings of this remarkable study are applicable beyond the United States. Data from Europe published in 2014 found that increased access to abortion services dramatically decreased the crime rates in the countries where it was legalized (Francois, Magni-Berton, & Weill, 2014). Interestingly, this cross-cultural study found a decrease in the homicide rate across multiple countries whereas the American study did not, perhaps reflecting the unique American exceptionalism around the subject of murder.²⁵ In the U.S., the legalization of abortion in 1973 is estimated to have led to a 6% reduction in out-of-wedlock teen birth rates between 1991 and 2002 (Donohue, Grogger, & Levitt,

2009); teenage pregnancy is, of course, a key driver of maternal crime and a major trafficking vulnerability. A follow-up study found that legalized abortion resulted in a 17.5% drop in overall crime from 1998 to 2014, or approximately 1% a year. From 1991 to 2014, violent crime (including homicide) and property crime each fell by approximately 50%. Legalized abortion, it turns out, accounts for an estimated 47% reduction of violent crime and 33% reduction of property crime for this period (Donohue & Levitt, 2020).

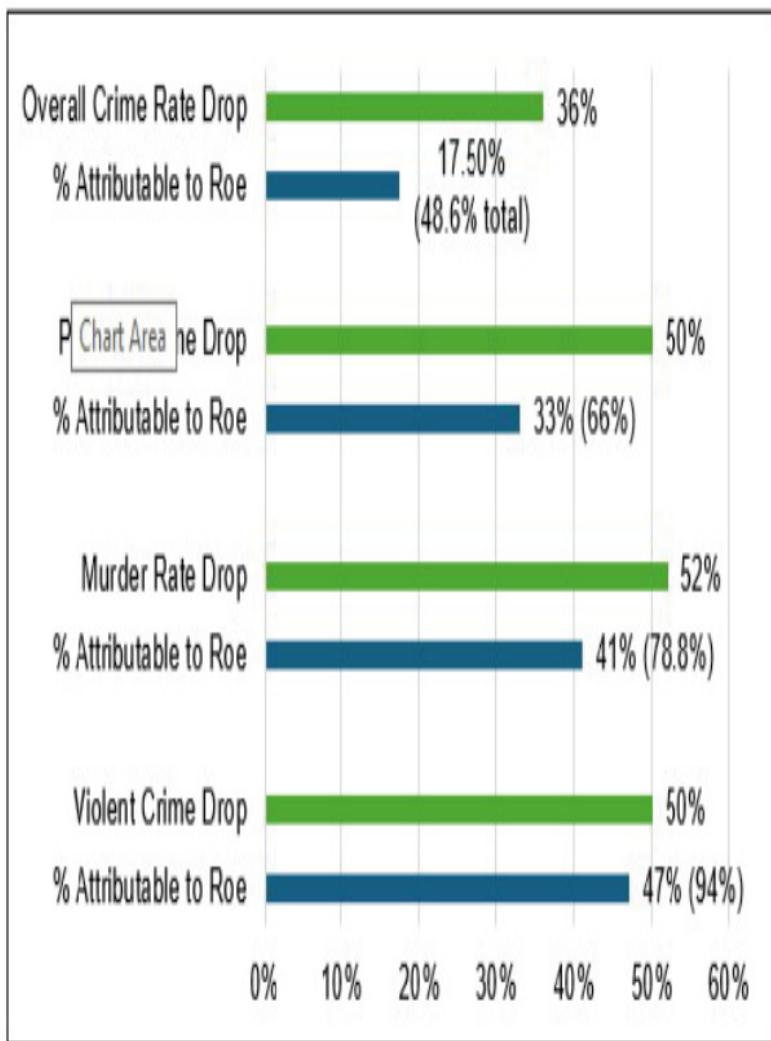


Figure 5.19. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Reduction of crime through the legalization of abortion following Roe*, using Donohue & Levitt, 2020 data. This indicates that 48.6% of the total drop in crime from 1998 to 2014 was due to the impact of legalized abortion following Roe v. Wade, as was 66% of the drop in property crime, 78.8% of the drop in homicide, and 94% of the drop in violent crime from 1991 to 2014.

Of course, all of this societal progress was subsequently thrown out the window by

six idiots in silky robes in June of 2022, at least two of whom were well-known sexual predators.²⁶

These incredible implications and data aside (which we will explore in much greater detail in the next volume), this is hardly the strongest argument – legally speaking, at least – against the criminalization of abortion. Being forced to carry a child as a living incubator and endure otherwise indescribable biological, psychological, and neurochemical changes for nine months (not to mention all that comes postpartum) and ultimately endure the trauma and pain of childbirth raises another critical issue: *it's forced labor*, a direct violation of the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution (Koppelman, 1990; Koppelman, 2010).

As any mother can attest, it is called going into *labor* for a reason.

This reality can be best observed through the examination of commercial surrogacy, or surrogacy for profit, which raises numerous issues of consent, coercion, and trafficking. Now to be perfectly blunt, this convoluted issue is simply best described as “a complete and total mess,” with elements of sex and labor trafficking interspersed with infant laundering. With multiple persons at stake (mother, child, donor, and sometimes even the donor's spouse), there are many angles to consider, and many ways that each person's rights can be violated, especially those of the mother and the child.

The Heritage Foundation and even the Catholic Church itself have called for commercial surrogacy to be labelled a form of human trafficking due to the risks to the mother's health, the resulting child's well-being, and the way in which a woman's body is taken away from her own sense of agency to be used as a “conduit” for the will of another, in a very real sense “commodifying” it (Melton & Israel, 2021; FAFCE, 2023; see also Dominus, 2022; Stark, 2022). Writing for the Heritage Foundation, Grace Melton and Melanie Israel of the Richard and Helen DeVos Center note the innate risks of pregnancy both to mother and child, citing research that mothers carrying fertilized eggs that are not her own (as per a traditional surrogate arrangement) has three times the risk of developing hypertension and preeclampsia, while the child is at increased risk of experiencing low birth weight and stillbirth.²⁷

Melton and Israel also raise the issue of children's rights, highlighting that children born to surrogates experience the harmful “primal wound” of losing their connection to their birth mother that is extensively documented in adopted children,²⁸ again highlighting the generational aspect of trafficking's impact. Adding insult to injury is the fact that commercialized surrogacy turns the resulting children into commercialized products themselves – goods to be traded or bought and sold (Abdullah, 2019). After all, the mother provides labor (by carrying the child to term), the child (product) is born and exchanged with the donor parents (the employer/buyer), and the mother (laborer) is paid for her services. Three cheers for capitalism!

Of course, it is important to remember that we're talking about actual, living and breathing human beings as the commodities in question – massive room for abuse and exploitation naturally ensues (Abdullah, 2019). This is perhaps most visible in India, where women and young girls experienced horrific forms of sex trafficking prior to the legalization of commercial surrogacy in 2008. Following this decision, these women were sex trafficked until they became pregnant as a result of RRP, at which point they were trafficked as surrogate mothers until they gave birth, then returned to a life of sex trafficking (Chatterjee, 2010). The slavers additionally trafficked additional poor,

illiterate women to manage and staff the trafficking ring. This practice has given rise to what are now known in academic circles by the highly technical term of, “baby factories,” which are “buildings, hospitals, or orphanages that have been converted into places for young girls and women to give birth to children for sale on the Black market” (Makinde, et al., 2016). Such “factories” are especially prominent in Nigeria and were also documented in Brazil in the case of João Teixeira de Faria, quite possibly the most prolific rapist and sex trafficker ever known to have existed.

This has given rise to what is known as “fertility tourism,” a form of medical tourism wherein a wealthy couple (such as from Australia) finds a surrogate mother in a poor country (such as a street vendor in Thailand) to birth the couple’s child. Such transnational surrogacy agreements are often highly coercive and grant extensive rights to the wealthy foreign couple at the expense of the impoverished mother. Moreover, with no current international framework regulating such agreements, there’s no guarantee that surrogates will actually be paid upon delivery (pun not intended) again raising clear issues as to labor trafficking (Parker, 2015-2016; see also Koppelman 1990, Koppelman, 2010).

In the Thailand case, the expectant mother learned that one of the two twins she was carrying had Down Syndrome and she was subsequently told to undergo an abortion by the Australian couple (again, we see the issue of eugenics arise). She refused, citing her Buddhist faith and the accompanying doctrine of nonviolence. She thus carried both fetuses to term and successfully delivered both babies, only to have the couple adopt the child *without* Down Syndrome. This case once again revealed something that adopted children worldwide have known for millennia: adoptive parents are extremely picky and self-serving when it comes to which children they will adopt.

The birth mother was left to care for the disabled baby on her own – and was never paid the full amount she was due. The case began to garner international media attention when it became known that the paternal/adoptive father had a whopping twenty-two child sex crime convictions against him, and that such a scheme likely was the only legal loophole available to him to acquire a child and thus appease his pedophilic predilections (Howard, 2014; Parker, 2015-2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic correlated with a skyrocketing increase in demand for infants, resulting in many women rushing to become commercial surrogates. As seen in the Thailand case, the most vulnerable women are often the ones who are preyed upon in this manner (Gilchrist, 2023; Stark, 2021). As of January 26, 2021, nearly five million women in the United States had lost their jobs (while men *gained* jobs) leading some to turn to OnlyFans to make ends meet – and others to become commercial surrogates. In the United States, 15-50% of all surrogates are military spouses, targeted by surrogacy agencies because of both their difficulty in finding jobs and their need to make additional income to support their families (Stark, 2021). Citing excessive debt and the need to provide for her four children, an Uzbekistani widow was documented as having traveled to Tblisi, Georgia to find work specifically as a surrogate, and women in Ukraine are similarly often misled or coerced into surrogacy due to extreme poverty, an issue made even worse by Russia’s invasion in 2014 and subsequent conflict escalation in 2022 (Dominus, 2022; Gilchrist, 2023).

As one can see, issues of race and gender are central to the issue of human

trafficking. Like the strands of a spider's web, they seem to intersect and connect with the larger picture in countless ways at countless places.

The clear and obvious takeaway is that access to affordable, safe, legal, and self-determined reproductive and maternal healthcare is essential to addressing the problem of slavery (Ross, 2023; Forrestal, 2022; Macahon, 2022; Collins & Skarparis, 2020; Bick, Howard, Oram, & Zimmerman, 2017; Barnert, et al., 2019).

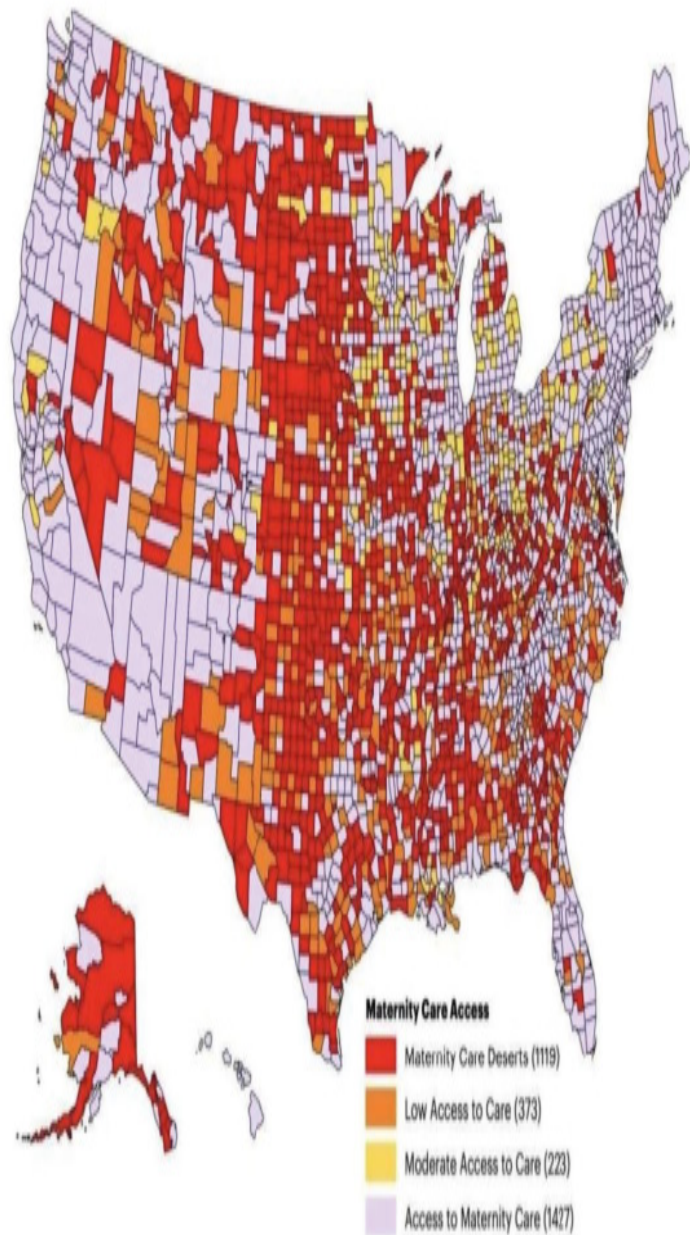


Fig 5.20 (March of Dimes, 2023) *Lack of access to maternal healthcare by county.* Future research is needed to investigate correlations between lack of maternal healthcare access and other vulnerabilities.

Moreover, while trafficked women frequently come into contact with healthcare

providers, there are many barriers that victims face with actually *accessing* the care they need – such as being turned away when they are unable to provide proof of address, insurance, or identification (which is normally confiscated by traffickers; Dovydaitis, 2010; Bick, Howard, Oram, & Zimmerman, 2017; Collins & Skarparis, 2020). This compounds the fact that trafficked women who are pregnant are at increased risk of health issues, including mental health disorders, that may affect not only them, but also the fetuses they are carrying (Collins & Skarparis, 2020; Foster, 2021). The complex sociocultural factors impacting these women, including housing, poverty, and more, influence both health outcomes and access to care. These findings are even more important to consider with regard to both minors who are experiencing commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) and the associated implications for teen pregnancy rates (Barnert, et al., 2019).

To put this simply, *slavery is a public health issue* as much as it is a matter of racial and gender equality (Chisholm-Straker & Stoklosa, 2017).

This may all be a hard truth to swallow for many concerned with trafficking phenomena, especially for those of a religious motivation. Unfortunately, the data on this matter are crystal clear – to the point that I had to strictly limit my findings on the subject to avoid beating the metaphorical poor, dead stallion into a drinkable slurpy. Simply put, anti-abortion activists are, albeit largely unintentionally, causing a great deal of harm by failing to consider the downstream effects of their proposed policies. Catholic nuns, after all, don't exactly wake up in the morning and ponder, "how can I make things worse for rape victims? How can I cause more suffering and injustice in the world?" Rather they, like most people, do what they think is right and best. After all, what is a better intention than saving an innocent unborn child?

However, remembering the old adage about good intentions, this should not be interpreted as an exoneration of the anti-abortion movement, for it is not. Far from it. We are, after all, talking about the road to *hell*. Moreover, and as the reader shall soon see, the worst crimes are sometimes committed not only in the name of God, but also "for the children." To quote *New York Times* journalist Charles M. Blow,

One doesn't have to operate with great malice to do great harm. The absence of empathy and understanding are sufficient. In fact, a man convinced of his virtue even in the midst of his vice is the worst kind of man.²⁹

Remarkably few people genuinely think or behave with malice at the cognitive level: that is, with the explicit intention to cause harm. Rather, harm just sort of happens, and then people make excuses about how it's anyone and everyone's fault but theirs (Gillman & Morton, 2023).³⁰ As we shall see, not even pedophiles and traffickers really think in such a linearly nefarious manner, for real life villains do not come prepackaged with cartoonish mustaches to nefariously twirl to alert audience members that they're the bad guy. Hardly anyone sets out to *do evil*.

Rather, *evil often just sort of happens*, making it much more innocuous and insidious than such contrived and stereotypical notions suggest. The unpleasant reality that very few are willing to accept is that not even serial killers or genocidal dictators typically seek to answer a conscious question of "how can I cause untold suffering and harm in the world today?" but instead seek to satisfy other innate, morally unacceptable (even to themselves!) motivations that somehow become acceptable through the mind's

credible powers of denial, rationalization, and self-justification. After all, Catholic nuns, it must be perfectly understood, have been *directly* responsible for some of the greatest atrocities in all of Christendom, many of which are picture-perfect examples of human trafficking (Balakrishna, 2018; Blakemore, 2018; WCCO, 2021; Moody, 2020; Nadeau, 2021).³¹ It is really a matter of us all being nurses in a burn ward, ripping bandages off of scorched victims instead of slowly and carefully removing them, thinking that we are helping alleviate misery when, in fact, we are *inflicting* unnecessary pain and suffering.

Moreover, as the data overwhelmingly demonstrates – and we still haven’t begun to discuss the full downstream implications of this data – if abortion access is not soon restored, one can expect to see trafficking and crimes against children in America become even more commonplace. That being said, by addressing the root causes of gender inequality, and thus addressing the underlying reasons for why women become vulnerable to sexual-based violence and coercion, both those who want to minimize the number of abortions as well as those who want to prevent trafficking can ultimately be satisfied,³² for the root cause of both issues is one and the same: *male violence* (Wrangham & Peterson, 1997; see also Eagleman, 2011, p. 159; Donahue & Levitt, 2020; Ricardo & Baker, 2008; Kristof & WuDunn, 2010). Similarly, as I noted before, most political questions can be traced back to the issue of slavery – and the thorny politics of abortion are no different (Sublette & Sublette, 2017; Feinstein, 2018; Beisel & Kay, 2004; McKeegan, 1993; Ross, 2023; Balmer, 2021; Balmer, n.d.; Shimron, 2021; Samuels & Potts, 2022).

Much more to the larger point I am trying to make is that all of this that we just discovered about coercive control, reproductive coercion, generational trauma, crimes against children, and the connection between domestic violence and slavery (not to mention the implications for democracy and how it can be subverted) came about through examination of how the policies of one single political issue impact trafficking across the United States, if not the world.

Imagine what we could learn if we examined each and every such issue. Do you see yet why slavery is the issue of the century, if not the entire millennia?

¹ This is due in part to the lack of available data on labor trafficking. Unlike sex trafficking, labor trafficking is much more difficult to spot, making good data less readily available for analysis. Whereas 460 survivors of sex trafficking were examined, only 67 survivors of labor trafficking were identified. This is an area that requires much additional research in the future.

² Banks and Kychelhahn, 2011 examined the demographics of identified victims counted in prosecuted cases of human trafficking, not among all identified survivors of trafficking. Other studies, such as Maroukis, Iglicka, & Gmaj, 2011, found an overwhelming 98% of labor trafficking victims to be lawful U.S. residents. This is more reflective of surveys and studies when the larger survivor population is examined. The resulting pattern could also reflect a bias in prosecution: that is, of which victims were deemed “worthy” and which offenders were deemed “bad” enough to go after. See Banks and Kychelhahn, 2011, Tables 5 and 6.

³ To make sure this wasn’t an anomaly, I examined crime data for multiple years both before and after the cited 2017 data. The number never delved below 50%, and even reached 58.4% in 2009. This is definitely a *trend*, not an anomaly.

⁴ See (Bloom, 2021).

⁵ (van de Rijt, Song, Shor, & Burroway, 2018)

6 As a historical note, syphilis did not exist in Europe until Columbus introduced it to the population upon returning from the New World. It was also largely unknown in Indigenous Americans until that time. In fact, the only place syphilis was readily found prior to Columbus' arrival was in llamas. Think about that for as long a time as you need (Tampa, et al., 2014).

7 One looks at American history through a different lens when one understands that the extermination of the indigenous population and the establishment of the colonial world is the same thing the Nazis sought to do in Europe – only infinitely more successful (Horne, 2022; Kühl, 2002; Whitman, 2018).

8 Pocahontas was the daughter of a chief. The Pamukey never had royalty: this is a European stereotype imposed upon the natives in North America.

9 Article II, Item E. Item D is also applicable, both in my experience and as reflected in the historical record, the latter of which reflects all items listed. The same argument applies to the treatment of African Americans.

10 Recall the discussion on the fetishization of Native Americans, especially Native women – see Stern, 2021; Berger, 2023.

11 More realistic estimates put the number of dead at a shocking 15 million. Keep in mind that a “mere” six million perished in the Holocaust compared to this figure, and then consider the role that race and colonialism have played in the reasons that you’ve never heard of this atrocity before. Also consider why Hitler thought he’d get away with massacring 6 million people: it was less than half of whom Belgium slaughtered in the Congo, and a mere drop in the bucket compared to what Britain did in India (see Sullivan & Hickel, 2023). Oh, right, you’ve never heard of that, either.

12 Again, note the role of race/ethnicity as a determinant of forced labor.

13 For the record, I *really* didn’t want to go here, but the data and collective evidence demands that I must. Rabbit holes are no fun, as they tend to be full of rabbits that bite, scratch, and pee all over the place.

14 Oshin, 2022. It shouldn’t surprise anyone that Sen. Garcia similarly invoked Planned Parenthood in her justification.

15 See Bewley, 2014; Kotisawan, 2021; Lynn, 2021; and Everett & Kim, 2015 for more detail.

16 Not all social service or non-profit organizations are what one could call “legitimate.” I know of one that let a four-year-old get *pushed* out a third-story window (thankfully landing on shrubs below), refused to call an ambulance despite the child’s broken limbs and obvious head trauma, and then covered up the incident because they didn’t want to be sued for not having called an ambulance and not having had proper window locks installed. When someone helpfully points out, as happened here, that there is a clear and easily remedied safety risk present, then that should be addressed *before* a child is harmed instead of bizarrely throwing up jazz hands and exclaiming, “that’s *not* how we do it here!” This same shelter had also disabled the fire alarm so that nobody would hear it in the event of an actual, honest to God fire. The reality is that the shelter industry can be horribly abusive to the populations it serves, and individuals are frequently trafficked out of and exploited within NGO shelters (Harris, 2021).

17 Let us also do away with pretending that these very same do-gooders don’t often make the most disparaging jokes about victims of domestic violence, rape, and sex trafficking, or make disgusting comments about how such victims are “milking” their circumstances. This is not a uniquely American problem, but rather a global one afflicting an entire profession (O’Malley, Dunlop & Egan, 2023, pp. 43-49). Training on the fundamentals of trafficking and coercive control simply must be made mandatory for this group of professionals.

18 Consider the implications with the increased popularity of the racist “great replacement theory”

among those pushing to outlaw abortion (Samuel & Potts, 2022; Balmer).

¹⁹ Of rapes committed in the United States, 77.3% are committed by a current or former intimate partner of the victim (Basile, et al., 2018). Again, the connection to domestic violence becomes clear: what we're talking about is all the exact same phenomena – slavery wears many masks.

²⁰ Texas, Arizona, Arkansas, and Missouri are the states in question.

²¹ The full horror of this revelation will be explored in the next few chapters and in particularly excruciating depth in the next volume. For now, simply consider how widespread this phenomenon is based upon what we've seen so far and just how many persons are impacted by generational trauma of this sort.

²² "Witnessing" domestic violence as a child really understates the nature of the harm done to these children. Indeed, it's quite dismissive to children's experiences as victims to merely describe them as "witnesses." Perpetrators and predators harm children through many pathways, not just seeing and/or hearing, and the harm often lasts a lifetime. But I'm getting ahead of myself here.

²³ Interestingly, infant mortality saw a dramatic increase as well. Between 2014 and 2021, infant mortality in Texas had fallen 15%, but in 2022 alone it increased by a shocking 11.5% over 2021 levels (Chapman, 2023). This is primarily due to the fact that mothers carrying fetuses with fatal abnormalities are now forced to birth them. Consider the downstream effects for traumatization of mothers and families.

²⁴ The reader is strongly encouraged to consult Dubner, 2019 and Balmer, 2021 and consider the implications around abortion politics, crime levels, private prisons, forced labor, and prison populations. This, more than anything else in this book, ties the sociocultural origins of this entire mess together. This is an incredible area ripe for future research and with dramatic implications for human society.

²⁵ This is easily explained, actually, but I must wait to pull the trigger on that until a later volume.

²⁶ Acts of abortion-related extremist violence skyrocketed following *Dobbs*, with 30 abortion opponents being charged federally in the year following the decision, nearly a third of all people charged federally with abortion-related crimes in the three decades prior, and a whopping 750% increase from those charged in 2021. Additionally, supporters of abortion rights were also charged for the first time for the same federal crimes as their ideological opponents (Swan, 2023).

²⁷ See also Bennhold & Pronczuk, 2022 for commentary on this "commodification" and "incubator" issue. Melton & Israel describe this phenomenon as "the commodification of human life." Subsequent chapters will demonstrate just how incredibly accurate they are in this assessment.

²⁸ Naturally, Melton & Israel then proceed to justify the adoption process that creates the very same harm and wherein the issue was first documented (Rome, 2023; Dubois, 2022). Cognitive dissonance is an absolute bitch, as we've seen several times already.

²⁹ Blow, 2012.

³⁰ Especially when it's somehow the work of the devil. The dark lord is a tried-and-true mechanism for evading accountability, which often feels like a personal attack when one is not willing to acknowledge how one's actions and poor decisions impact others.

³¹ Bear in mind that these citations only cover the 20th century – and are *far* from exhaustive. The ideology highlighted in Balakrishna, 2018 can similarly explain a great deal of what's observed here: "I think the world is being much helped by the suffering of the poor people." See this particularly disturbed individual's comments on abortion as well to glimpse the full-circle connection.

³² Of course, this is assuming that those who want to limit abortions are acting out of genuine

benevolence for both mother and child, and not out of some other, possibly unconscious, motivation – and/or out of being the unwitting victims of yet another psy-op. I'm sure absolutely no evidence whatsoever of that exists.

Chapter 6

Venom: Substances, Mental Illness, and Disability

“Being considered ‘crazy’ by those who are still victims of cultural conditioning is a compliment.”

– Jason Hairston

“How exactly is a woman supposed to respond to being raped and abused for years that will NOT lead you to diagnose her with one of 541 mental disorders and then gaslight her for the rest of her life?”

– Dr. Jessica Taylor

In the twisted world of slavery and trafficking, substance abuse is both a victim vulnerability and a predator's tool. When combined with mental illness or disability, the predatory effect and the victim susceptibility are both amplified through a feedback loop. This chapter is devoted to exploration of this phenomenon.

Substance Dependency and Addiction

Dependency on addictive substances is the single most common vulnerability exploited by predators in trafficking situations. Where such dependency does not already exist, traffickers and abusers of every kind endeavor to create it (Feehs & Currier Wheeler, 2021; also see the supplementary references for this chapter). Per Polaris, 2023 data, an alarming 93% of all human trafficking survivors experienced substance abuse and/or mental health challenges *or* lived with someone who did. The Polaris findings are so remarkably consistent with numerous other studies of the relationship between trafficking and substance use and dependency that consensus has clearly been reached in

the field.

Historically, coercion as defined in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(3) required an element of physical violence to be legally recognized (Chon, 2022). This changed significantly in the 2014 federal case *U.S. v. Fields*, in which the perpetrator was found to have provided variants of oxycodone, Xanax, carisoprodol, and methadone to his victims until the victims were addicted, at which point he induced withdrawal, forcing them into sex trafficking.¹ This critical decision determined that the drug-based coercion scheme of the trafficker, Andrew Blane Fields, met both the “coercion” and “serious harm” standards of 18 U.S.C. § 1591, the section of the TVPA specifically dealing with sex trafficking of minors. In short, drug addiction can be every bit as coercive and destructive as physical violence, and this is now recognized under United States federal case law. Similarly, addictive substances often play a critical role in the cycle of trafficking, with addiction setting in before, during, or after trafficking, thereby making a victim vulnerable to re-trafficking and re-exploitation.

In a 2014 examination of sex trafficking victims, 84.3% of those surveyed reported using alcohol, drugs, or a combination thereof during their trafficking experience, significantly higher than their non-trafficked peers (Lederer & Wetzel, 2014). Just over a third of these individuals reported that their use of substances was forced by their trafficker. These findings were expanded upon by Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022, providing crucial insight into the dynamics of how traffickers use illegal and addictive substances to control and coerce their victims.

The study makes clear that if a third party (i.e. a trafficker) uses substances to control and/or groom victims, then the TVPA of 2000 applies via the legal doctrine outlined in *U.S. v. Fields*. Additionally, the research highlights how drug trafficking and sex trafficking often overlap, with drug traffickers also frequently being sex traffickers. This points to an important line of inquiry for law enforcement, especially when confronting large criminal networks where the two phenomena go “hand in hand” with one another (Shelley, 2012; see also Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019). In fact, the 2022 study by Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson found that a remarkable number of interviewees reported that their first trafficker was their drug dealer – including some who were their spouses or boyfriends. More to the point is how gang membership is often intergenerational, allowing for significant overlap with domestic sex trafficking operations in which familial trafficking often occurs. Insights into the generational nature of trauma can also be gained through future research into this area.

This study revealed that familial trafficking of domestic minors is typically motivated not by financial greed, but rather by an adult family member’s need to access substances: the adult subsequently engages in the sex trafficking of the minor in exchange for access to their addictive substance of choice. The data clearly suggest that whenever a victim of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) is found, their parents should then be thoroughly investigated for possibly being the perpetrator. For 68% of DMST victims live at home, 71% of DMST victims live with a parent/guardian, and 60-72% of victims report parental/family substance abuse (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022; Kogler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022; Goldberg, et al., 2017). Along this line it is important to note that a parent who is engaged in prostitution, “to maintain her drug addiction may not only directly introduce her child to sex buyers in exchange for drugs or money, but the exposure in early childhood to prostitution

normalizes these transactions as a means for survival.” (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022 p.108). This being noted, Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022 makes clear that the extent to which traffickers exploit their family members to fuel their own substance dependency is not well understood, and more research is needed.

Parental substance use similarly poses a generational threat in predisposing children to experiencing slavery. Among victims of DMST, the child is frequently a victim of abandonment and neglect due to substance abuse by family members and parents. Similarly, a 2002 study found that 83% of adult women who were sex trafficked reported growing up in a home in which at least one parent struggled with substance abuse or addiction issues (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014). This can have a compounding effect on increasing the vulnerability of already at-risk youth: children removed from their family of origin and placed into foster care, residential treatment, or group homes experience dramatic feelings of abandonment, fear, loss, isolation, anxiety and stress. To cope, they will run away from their new, seemingly hostile environment and the resulting homelessness makes them even more vulnerable to the machinations of predators (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014, p. 28).

Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson define three typical patterns that traffickers fall into when employing substances in their grooming patterns. However, the authors were also quick to point out that such individuals, “do not operate within neat silos of behaviour and social networks but along a spectrum of tactics and relationships.” Examples will be provided for illustrative purposes from those presented in the study as well as those I’ve encountered over my career.

The first pattern is one often used by a boyfriend, “loverboy,” or “Romeo” trafficker, who poses as a victim’s intimate partner in order to groom and assert control over the victim. In these instances, substances are introduced socially, often under the guise of helping a victim to “relax,” explore, or to build trust with the predator in question. The illicit nature of many of these substances adds to the “secret” that is kept between the pair during this stage of grooming. Many victims shared how the emotional bond between them and their trafficker was a motivating factor in beginning use of substances (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022). Statements such as, “he wanted me to,” “he made me do it,” or “it was his idea,” are common from victims who experience this type of trafficking. In many instances of this sort of trafficking, victims’ initial point of entry into trafficking was a drug dealer who posed as an intimate partner, offering access to drugs in exchange for access to sex or intimacy (Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022).

Other victims report what has been termed the “weaponization” of drugs (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022; Meshelemiah & Lynch 2019; see also Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022). This is the forced use of addictive substances to create a dependency upon the trafficker. One individual interviewed in Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022 was coerced into drug use through threats of physical violence. Had she said no, she would have been brutally beaten. Once addicted, victims are forced to engage in sex acts with buyers in order to be “rewarded” by their trafficker with their next hit, more often than not never seeing any of the income they earn through the forced sex trade. Again, it is important to remember that a remarkable 27.9% of victims reported that their substance abuse/dependency started through such coercion and force

(Lederer & Wetzel, 2014). As with all things in this field, this is likely an underestimate given the lack of general knowledge the public has as to what constitutes coercion. In the human trafficking world, and especially when it comes to women who experience sex trafficking, drugs are turned into what one researcher calls “a weapon of mass destruction,” one that gives the predator control over an already vulnerable victim while simultaneously disarming the victim completely (Meshelemiah & Lynch 2019).

Additionally, some victims turn to drugs and alcohol to cope, either during their time being exploited or in the aftermath of escaping. Trafficking is a harrowing process, and addictive substances can prove to be an “out” from daily trauma. Unfortunately, such addictions can spiral out of control, leaving victims to return to sex work or to their traffickers in order to feed their addiction (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson 2022; Chon, 2022). Victims who turn to substances as a coping mechanism after escaping their traffickers are at increased risk of being re-trafficked by either their former traffickers or new ones. Crossover from sex trafficking into labor trafficking and vice versa are also frequently seen in these cases. Understanding the role of trauma is critical in aiding survivors of trafficking and to treating any substance dependency issues that may result from that life-altering trauma.

Much like combat veterans, survivors of human trafficking have a hard time reintegrating into society. This struggle fuels a cycle of poverty that survivors often have trouble escaping, leading to homelessness and eventual reentry into trafficking as a means of mere survival (Polaris, 2023). Traffickers remove victims from their healthy support networks, and when this combines with unstable housing for any significant period of time, the underlying substance abuse caused by the trauma of the trafficking experience can end up placing victims in a worse state than they were when they were initially victimized. Returning to sex work may be the only path they see that leads to housing, emotional support, a sense of belonging, or the ability to fuel their trafficking-induced addiction, resulting in exceptional risk of re-victimization (Eastwood-Paticchio, 2019).

There are numerous variants to these patterns, and the article’s authors’ words about behavior not falling into neat silos must be carefully considered. Several examples from the study that correlate with the author’s own experiences in the field include Romeo pimps who convince their victims to enter sex trafficking out of perceived “economic necessity,” only to provide drugs or alcohol as a kind “reward” for the stress and trauma of the nature of the work (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson 2022, p. 105). This serves a dual purpose for the predator: the victim not only becomes addicted to the substance provided, becoming more dependent on the trafficker, but also becomes more emotionally bonded to the trafficker, seeing the perpetrator as a generous and loving savior who genuinely cares about their welfare.

Gangs may utilize a combination of forced substance use, relocation, and physical abuse to maintain control over victims, as seen in the case of “gorilla”/guerilla pimps. More sophisticated organized crime elements – such as those involved in illicit massage parlors – combine all of the above with the strategy of specifying some members to pose as intimate partners for recruitment and grooming purposes while others handle the more physical and/or business aspects of the network.

In the author’s experience, traffickers are exceptionally good at adapting to their environment. This fact is reinforced by data showing that drug traffickers frequently

enter into the slave trade where they risk less chance of getting caught while remaining able to utilize the same transit routes they mastered in the drug trade (Shelley, 2012).³ Drug traffickers also frequently “suggest” to burgeoning addicts and customers that they enter “the life” as a means to pay for their increasing debts or as a “helpful tip” to make ends meet, ingratiating themselves with their potential victims whom they proceed to exploit. Victims have also stated that they were told they were taking what they believed to be a “milder” drug, such as marijuana, only to later find out it had been switched out with or laced with another, stronger drug such as crack, creating a dependency (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson 2022). Additionally, many victims have been found to have become addicted to drugs and substances administered to them without their knowledge (Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022).

Clearly, substance abuse is more than “drug addicts and alcoholics are bad people, m’kay?” as medical science has known for many years. Unfortunately, such stereotypes persist in society and contribute to the perpetuation of human trafficking. In fact, these very stereotypes are part of the problem: ultimately, pimps rely on public perceptions of what determines free will and real choice regarding substance use and prostitution. A victim who uses substances socially with their partner or in party and nightclub scenes is perceived by the unlearned person to choose to engage in this behavior and environment, and therefore the relationship with their traffickers. First responders often have no choice but to believe victims who say they love their partner (who is actually their pimp) and that they are “choosing to prostitute.”⁴

This helps us to better understand why slavery is so difficult to combat: it’s not just hidden; it’s also concealed through the use of quirks of human psychology that most people don’t even know exist. The critical key to addressing the problem, then, lies in understanding why we overlook abuses that occur right in front of our eyes, with concerns about supposed free will and the problem of coercion being of utmost importance to this discussion.⁵ Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson are also quick to point out that the criminalization of these addictive substances in turn leads to the criminalization of victims, a fact that traffickers both know and exploit:

Prostitution stings cause significant harm to trafficking victims and undoubtedly play right into the trafficker’s plan: the victim gets arrested, the pimp bails her out. The result is more debt bondage to her trafficker as she is forced into prostitution to earn back the money it costs to pay her legal fees and bail money. Further, this approach sometimes even involves arresting and using violence and threats against minors who are being commercially sexually exploited.

Police often view victims of sex trafficking as criminals, particularly so when there are drugs involved, given that evidence of drug possession is impossible to ignore. This means victims are being criminalized as part of their victimization circumstances. Traffickers understand their victims’ drug use will help them avoid criminal charges, “because those under the influence of drugs, when apprehended by law enforcement, may lose their credibility and presumed innocence, distracting from their victimization.”⁶

Again, we see that while we have no idea what to do about the problem of human trafficking, what we *are* doing is actually making the problem worse – and the bad guys

know it. Worse, still, is that they're actively taking advantage of it, trapping innocent victims with the very institutions that are – ostensibly, at least – designed to protect them. This practice is known as **forced criminality**: compelling or coercing another to commit a crime in order to protect oneself from prosecution and/or to render that person vulnerable and subject to the criminal justice system.

I must stress a point here: far from being the solution to trafficking and the threat to predators that the modern abolitionist movement hails them as, law enforcement is among the topmost frequently used tool in the trafficker toolkit. The human tendency to criminalize anything that we fear (or merely do not fully understand) plays right into these dynamics, making the problem somehow, incredibly, even worse.⁷ As unpleasant as this may be to recognize, the data formidably supports this conclusion: the overwhelming majority of incarcerations in the United States are from drug trafficking convictions, while a mere handful are from human trafficking-related offenses (Shelley, 2012; also, this is such common knowledge that I really shouldn't even need a citation for it). The very systems we've set up and convinced ourselves are the quintessential fabric of a safe, just, and moral society are anything *but* what keeps us secure. In fact, they keep a great many in a perpetual state of danger.

And they are far from just and moral.

The authors of this study made this connection all the more evident by highlighting how important it is to properly identify the typology of the trafficker whenever a victim is discovered (Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022, p. 109). This can result in victims of some types of trafficking being more recognizable as victims than others. For instance, in a hospital where the staff has received training on intimate-partner violence, a victim under the direct coercive control of her intimate partner or "Romeo" pimp might be more visibly a victim than a victim of DMST who is dismissed as having a normal parent/child relationship. Similarly, an adult sex trafficking victim with a substance abuse disorder may easily be dismissed as a "frequent flyer" seeking painkillers instead of as a victim in need of a safety plan. Such cases highlight the need for more effective training for medical professionals as to the nature of human trafficking as well as the dangers posed by stereotypes, biases, and heuristics.

There is one more critical takeaway from this study that is of particular significance: not only did the information within come from the direct lived experience of sex trafficking victims, but one of the authors of the groundbreaking review was herself a survivor of sex trafficking. This highlights the benefits and fundamental insights survivors can offer into the true workings of slavery when they aren't merely tokenized by the alleged abolition movement. We are handicapping ourselves by not empowering the people who have the most to offer us in this fight – thus, is it really any surprise that we haven't made any progress since the TVPA of 2000 (or even since 1865) when we ask survivors to give their time, knowledge, and labor, yet won't pay or even so much as acknowledge them for their contributions?

Isn't that the very thing we're supposed to be against, or did I miss another memo?

A wide variety of substances are used in slavery, and their use goes beyond the methods outlined so far. Traffickers may supply victims with drugs or other substances to break down any remaining resistance the victim demonstrates and ensure compliance (British Columbia, 2014). In sex trafficking, substances may be administered to ensure a victim's euphoric mood prior to engaging in sexual activity, to reward victim

productivity, or to demonstrate a trafficker's supreme control through the initiation of withdrawal symptoms (Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022). Similarly, much as traffickers may get their victims addicted to shatter their credibility with law enforcement, substances may also be used to destroy their memory and recollection of their time trafficked. Traumatic memory is already heavily fragmented, and the mind-altering effects of drugs or alcohol can even further reduce the credibility of victims should they choose to testify against their abusers (Levine, 2015). Some traffickers are smart enough to know this, making prosecutions based on victim testimony haphazard at best.

Drugs that are commonly used to control and coerce victims in slavery schemes include, but are hardly limited to, tobacco, alcohol, prescription drugs, hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, sedatives (including sleeping pills and antidepressants), opioids, and marijuana (Meshelemiah & Lynch 2019). Stimulants are often used to increase victim productivity, in some cases keeping victims awake for periods of up to a week before they are allowed to sleep. Amphetamines, including methamphetamines, are frequently seen in cases of labor trafficking. Simon and Hepburn, 2013 document this process as being disturbingly commonplace among the multitudes of slaves that populate the world's fishing trawler fleets. The force-feeding of amphetamines was similarly documented in the weaponized trafficking of Kurdish immigrants in Belarus who were given the stimulants and sent across the Polish border at baton-point as a prelude to the 2022 escalation of the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine (Frantzman, 2021). Similarly, narcotic substances are frequently used to addict and radicalize child soldiers recruited by extremist criminal organizations such as the Taliban (Zarnowski, 2022). First, the Taliban abducts young boys who they introduce to drugs in order to make them compliant for Bacha Bazi, or "boy play," AKA sexual slavery. Then, when the boys "age out" of being deemed appropriate for sexual relations, they are then given higher levels of addictive substances with orders to become martyrs for the cause as suicide bombers.

The use of coercive control through addictive substances in labor trafficking is poorly understood due to the obsessive focus the anti-trafficking movement has on sex trafficking. However, some insights can be gathered from considering the experiences of victims of DMST and child labor. Of medical records from twenty-five minors from the United States who experienced DMST, 92% reported drug and/or alcohol use to their medical provider, with 20% reporting that their substance use was directly related to their recruitment into trafficking (Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022). This was compared to the records of fifty-one minors from the United Kingdom who experienced various forms of labor trafficking, 18% of whom reported a history of substance misuse. While hardly being representative of either population for a number of reasons (low sample size, different cultures, findings not applicable to adult victims, etc.), the key takeaway is that there are significant differences in the way addictive substances are used and misused in sex and labor trafficking. Clearly, further research is needed to better understand how labor traffickers exploit dependency and addiction.

Substance use and dependency also appears heavily correlated with DMST, and not merely for the reasons previously discussed. Across the literature, abnormally high rates of substance use among DMST populations have been documented, even exceeding those of adult populations. In one study, 92% of DMST victims reported substance use or dependency (Moore, et al., 2020). Thus, the identification of substance use in a minor

should serve as a clear red flag to any responsible adult to further screen that minor for signs of human trafficking. Substance dependency appears second only to abuse/neglect of a minor (96% per Polaris, 2023) as a correlate of DMST. If both abuse *and* substance use are confirmed, it is safer to assume the child is being exploited in some form than to presume that they are not. Indications of parental substance abuse should raise additional red flags (Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022; Goldberg, et al., 2022). It is critical to identify abuse and exploitation of minors early on: substance use, clinical substance abuse, and an early age of first use of alcohol/drug use are all risk factors that predispose minors to future exploitation. (Franchino-Olsen, 2021). Such risk factors that are present in childhood are known as *Adverse Childhood Experiences*, or ACEs, and are central to understanding the self-perpetuating nature of trafficking.

While this section may be short in comparison to the previous chapter's focus on racial and gender vulnerabilities, the lessons here are no less important. Simply put, across the board, the discovery of substance abuse, dependency, or addiction should result in an immediate screening for human trafficking, be it in a medical, social services, criminological, or youth setting. As an important corollary to this point, law enforcement officers need to be aware and be trained to recognize that *all* criminal offenses, but especially prostitution, juvenile offenses, and gang-related offenses in which the offender presents with a dependency should result in giant red flags being raised for potential trafficking implications. These cases are far from the open and shut matters that they are often treated as. Further research must also be undertaken to understand how this particular vulnerability presents in various slavery scenarios to allow for better identification of victims by medical professionals. Chemical and substance use is perhaps the best indicator of DMST in a medical setting, second only to evidence of abuse and/or neglect.

Likewise, the connection between drug trafficking and sex trafficking must be better explored, with law enforcement investigating drug traffickers for possible sex trafficking. This is for two purposes: one, to identify victims for recovery, and two, to better map out and understand criminal networks that otherwise may evade detection. Similarly, in cases where there may not be enough evidence against a drug trafficking ring or dealer to convict on drug charges, pursuing a sex trafficking angle may yield the requisite evidence, and vice versa. This approach may be even more important when dealing with offenders connected to larger international or state-sponsored criminal organizations (Shelley, 2012). Moreover, identifying a trafficker's typology and methodology is critical to apprehending the offender and successfully identifying and intervening on behalf of any victims.

Additionally, whenever a victim of DMST is identified, the parents of the exploited minor should be investigated as possible perpetrators of the heinous offense and not assumed to be innocent, naïve nonces who have no idea who their kid is talking to on social media, which is the way the anti-trafficking movement portrays them. More often than not, in this humble investigator's experience at least, the parents know *exactly* who their child is talking to.

They introduced them to each other, after all.

Mental Health, Mental Illness, and Disabilities

There is a well-established link between human trafficking and mental health.

However, despite being perhaps the most well-documented association with trafficking, our understanding of the connection between the two is very much a chicken-or-the-egg situation: which came first? Did experiencing slavery cause one to develop mental health issues, or even an outright diagnosable mental illness? Or did having mental health issues predispose one to experiencing trafficking?

The most honest answer is simply, “we don’t know.” The scientific evidence is not at all clear at this point. However, there is good reason to believe that the truth is a mixture of the two. Experiencing slavery leads to increased adverse mental outcomes, while having poor mental health may predispose one to being trafficked. Indeed, we know quite well the effects of having experienced trafficking from a mental health perspective: it’s absolutely devastating and the equivalent of psychological torture (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014). However, there is a downright frightening dearth of research on how poor mental health predisposes one to experiencing trafficking. This area needs a great deal of attention in future research so that this vulnerability can be better understood.

Per Polaris data, 93% of trafficking survivors experienced mental health or substance abuse issues or lived with someone who did (Polaris, 2023). Immediately, one can see a problem with this data: mental health problems and substance abuse are measured together, further obscuring our insight into this which-came-first issue. Figuring out this interplay is fundamental to understanding how one becomes vulnerable to traffickers’ ploys, thus allowing us to harden targets to prevent them from falling for the traffickers’ lures. Mental health problems predispose an individual to substance abuse problems, another vulnerability that predators prey upon (National Institute of Mental Health).

This is a critical point and a focus of this book: vulnerabilities stack on top of one another, compounding, with each vulnerability making a person more susceptible to others. If a predator can’t exploit one risk factor, then the predator will turn around and try another. It’s much akin to hacking a computer system: if one cannot gain access through one vulnerable point, then the hacker will try another and another until entry is made. Vulnerabilities in humans are no different: the fewer vulnerabilities one presents with, the less likely a person is to be “hacked.” Hacking a human being is known as **social engineering**, and predators are adept at this form of manipulation.⁸ If one has a need, a predator, trafficker, or pimp will offer to fill it. If one has many needs, the same person will offer to fill them all, making the victim all the more dependent on the perpetrator – and all the more reluctant to leave them. The entire mind will twist and cavort around, finding ways to justify the dependency and the relationship. It is psychological enslavement – *brainwashing* – of the purest form at the deepest cognitive and biological levels, as the victim often doesn’t even realize what has happened.

Thus, it is important to understand the interplay between mental health and substance abuse given that addictive substances can be utilized as a weapon to short-circuit the brain’s pleasure/reward centers (Meshelemiah & Lynch 2019). If these centers are already malfunctioning, such as in a person struggling with depression, anxiety, or PTSD, then this individual is at increased risk to turn to addictive substances to cope, thereby adding another vulnerability for a potential predator to exploit. At the same time, generational trauma can cause genetic changes in later generations that predispose individuals to both substance abuse disorders and mental health disorders, such as in Indigenous populations which experience increased mental health problems alongside

heightened risk of substance abuse (Krishnamoorthi, 2019; Brave Heart, 2011; Nutton & Fast, 2015; Morgan & Freeman, 2009).⁹ As if this were not enough, substance use can change brain structure and function, in turn resulting in mental illness (National Institute of Mental Health; Mayo Clinic Staff, 2022). Merely having ADHD increases the likelihood of experiencing addiction due to the underlying neurology of the disease, revealing just how intricate this interplay is.

One begins to see why the data is so blurred, but nonetheless the problem persists for those attempting to understand this from a vulnerabilities perspective. In fact, in many cases a feedback loop is created, a common pattern when examining trafficking phenomena: suffering from poor mental health predisposes one to being trafficked. Once out of the trafficking situation, the psychological scars left from one's experience in slavery can cause one to turn to substances to cope. This, in turn, renders the individual even more vulnerable to experiencing future trafficking, AKA, being *re-trafficked*. Once again, the compounding and reinforcing nature of vulnerabilities is apparent.

Modern developments in American society and institutions also need to be considered when examining the role of stress, mental illness, and trauma as factors predisposing children to trafficking later in life. Experiencing a school shooting drastically affects enrollment and test scores and may predispose those who witness such horrors to later trafficking (Belard & Kim, 2016). The role of school shootings (and other forms of violence in childhood) as an adverse childhood experience that creates a trafficking vulnerability is relatively unexplored, but with potentially significant implications that warrant further research.

This brings us to the issue of self-esteem, an important aspect of psychology and one that is essential to this discussion. **Self-esteem** can be thought of as self-confidence or as self-respect: it's our confidence in our own worth and being. Simply put, as the human brain developed, this cognitive construct emerged as a survival mechanism to give humans a sense of worth and meaning in a hostile, unforgiving, and often deadly environment. Early humans did not have a pleasant existence, and all of nature very much wanted to kill them. Self-esteem gave these early humans a reason to keep living. Without such a self-concept, *homo sapiens* might have taken a look at the angry world around them and decided to commit collective suicide by throwing themselves like lemmings off a cliff (Hicks, 2021).

Self-esteem is a critical aspect of the way mental health can be exploited as a vulnerability: in fact, low self-esteem is perhaps the most widely recognized vulnerability across the literature (Shared Hope International, 2023; Polaris, 2018a; Polaris, 2019; Polaris, 2023; Bales, 2012; Zarnowski, 2022; UNODC, 2020; Koegler, Wood, Bahlinger, & Johnson, 2022; Goldberg, et al., 2017; Moore, et al., 2020; Palmer Home for Children, 2023; Allison, n.d.; Vrubliauskaitė, 2018; Finigan-Carr, 2020). Again, however, we encounter a chicken-or-the-egg situation: while low self-esteem is strongly and irrevocably correlated with trafficking, few have delved into the question of causality or directionality. That is, yet again, a problem of determining which came first: did having low self-esteem cause the victim to be trafficked, or did being trafficked cause one to suffer from low self-esteem? Or both? And again, we don't really know, because researchers haven't really asked survivors of slavery about their self-esteem before, during, and after their time in a trafficking situation.¹⁰

This is a particularly important thread to unravel and understand when it comes to

children's self-esteem and how they develop, become exploited, and enter into trafficking situations. As we'll see later through examining adverse childhood experiences, what happens in childhood tends to follow one throughout a lifetime – and affects society as a whole. Yet as if on cue, the world is simply *awful* for the self-esteem of young children, especially young girls. A constant barrage of cultural norms and standards (not all of which may be healthy) combined with media messages (*most* of which are not healthy) chisel and shape children from the moment they can understand media into conforming to whatever society deems as *normal*, with issues such as beauty standards, peer pressure, hormones, and the normal trials of adolescence making finding one's sense of identity and belonging a living hell for some children. It's honestly surprising that anyone emerges alive from that mess, let alone as a semi-functioning adult.

Adding insult to injury, a child who has never been shown love may be manipulated through the grooming process to believe that their trafficker really loves them. Or, likewise, a young girl who doesn't feel that she is "pretty" might begin to swoon under all the attention she gets from grown men as she is groomed and exploited without realizing how her low self-esteem is being weaponized against her (Vrubliauskaitė, 2018). Once under a predator's control, what little remains of the victim's self-worth is often obliterated to keep the victim compliant: the victim is made to feel worthless or told they can't do anything other than what they are being exploited for, a common thread seen across victims of child abuse, interpersonal/domestic violence, human trafficking, and those of crimes against humanity. Low self-esteem is a risk factor for children to experience childhood sexual abuse due to their needs for affirmation, acceptance, and admiration (Allison, n.d.). Children who are bullied or whose parents also display low self-esteem are particularly visible targets that predators often prey upon, revealing the greater sociocultural/environmental aspects of exploitation. Without a sense of their own self-worth, children often don't understand the significance of setting their own boundaries or their own consent, highlighting severe problems in uneducated and outdated authoritarian parenting styles. Of course, experiencing trauma such as that from sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse/exploitation, or other adverse childhood experiences directly causes low self-esteem, creating another re-trafficking feedback loop (Palmer Home for Children, 2023).

Poor mental health and mental illness can create vulnerability in myriad ways that extend beyond self-esteem issues. Reduced cognitive capacity and understanding, common in people with mental health issues, can increase their dependency on others (Altun, et al., 2017). This is easily understood by anyone who has experienced "brain fog." This is all the more a threat for those who suffer from long-term psychiatric disorders or severe mental illness in which these capacities are often further reduced, sometimes by medication. Severe psychiatric conditions, including schizophrenia and psychotic disorders, have been found among members of trafficked populations (Altun, et al., 2017; Calvo, 2014). Investigators and caregivers must be watchful of who controls the medications of such individuals and should consider cases where access to medication may be used as a form of coercive control over such disabled individuals, either by overprescribing, AKA "doping" the individual into a stupor or withholding medication to induce psychological torment.

Those with intellectual or cognitive disabilities are at significantly higher risk of

being trafficked or exploited than their peers. In fact, a shocking 90% of autistic women are estimated to have been victims of sexual exploitation and violence at least once in their lives (Cazalis, Reyes, Lduc, & Gourion, 2022). It is thus not terribly surprising that there are many ways in which disabled individuals may be exploited by traffickers and other predators. In order to better understand risk factors and modalities, future research clearly needs to better identify what percentage of mental illnesses reported by the trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence reporting populations are in fact neurodiverse diagnoses. The associated population is targeted for a number of reasons, and the various disabilities an individual presents with can render them vulnerable in many ways. Disabled individuals may require a caregiver to take care of their basic needs, and this normalizes an innate power imbalance in their routine relationships. It doesn't matter that their caregiver doesn't necessarily exploit them, although that is certainly a risk as well: this imbalance can and often does carry over to the person's other relationships due to the disabled individual's reliance on the caregiver. The person with the disability in many cases has internalized a learned response to comply with their caregiver's demands as a simply matter of ordinary routine – something that an abuser or trafficker can take advantage of.

In one case Polaris described, this dynamic combined with the social isolation that many individuals with disabilities experience. A trafficker posed as a potential boyfriend of an adult woman with intellectual disabilities at a training and vocational center. He convinced the woman that her parents, counselors, and friends did not want her to become an independent adult, weaponizing her fears of being treated like a child (Polaris, 2018 August). This led to her isolating from those individuals and spending all her time with her trafficker, who proceeded to commercially sex traffic her out of his home.

This appears to be a common tactic among traffickers who exploit this particular vulnerability, and it intersects with victims' own low self-esteem as one survivor from Polaris' sex trafficking survivors' focus group attested to:

I was born disabled and that is what led me to be vulnerable to being trafficked... [My trafficker] played on that fear that my parents [instilled in me] that I couldn't hold down a real job or support myself. Like, this is the only thing I'll ever amount to. (Polaris, 2018 August)

This speaks volumes to what we saw earlier about the role of society in shaping young people's images of self-worth, and it also speaks volumes to the role of parents. Instances of trafficking and grooming are rarely merely instances of a single perpetrator and a lone victim: a *lot* happened before that victim came to meet that trafficker, rapist, or abuser, and a *lot* of people bear responsibility for what happens to that victim, aside from just the individual who is criminally liable.

This feeds into how individuals with disabilities may be further victimized. Lacking proper sex education, being desensitized to touch, and not knowing about their rights, they may not be fully cognizant of their ability to refuse consent. When it comes to unwanted touching, especially in cases where extensive medical procedures have become normalized, disabled individuals may not be able to distinguish the appropriate from the inappropriate. They may not know what constitutes a crime, what their rights are as a victim of a crime, or that anything untoward has happened to them, not to mention what to report to whom, and when. Such individuals may even rely upon their abusers and

traffickers to tell them what is important and what is not, positioning them for abuse through no fault of their own. Abuse of this population runs rampant, and one begins to see why such alarming statistics as those seen among autistic women are so prevalent. To make matters worse, traffickers may become interested in members of this vulnerable population to exploit their victims' public benefits, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or disability income (SSDI) (Polaris, 2018 August). We find that children with disabilities are three times as likely as their peers to be sexually abused (Kanarowski). It is thus highly recommended that parents of children with disabilities have age-appropriate conversations with their child about sex and consent as early as possible to prevent abuse from occurring, no matter how awkward, uncomfortable, or "silly" it may seem.

This becomes all the more important for those individuals who have disabilities that affect their communication and/or speech. Such individuals are particularly predisposed to exploitation because they are not as able to report their experiences as their peers are. In some cases, they may be dependent on their traffickers for interpretation, such as in cases of deafness. These victims are also subject to immense and often invisible discrimination and prejudice, causing those to whom they do report their abuse to simply not believe their reports – even friends and family, and *especially* friends and family when the abuser is a friend and/or family member (which, statistically, it most often is). Polaris noted that it often takes a report to the National Human Trafficking Hotline before the victim is taken seriously, with individuals who have cognitive or communicative disabilities being particularly affected in this manner (Polaris, 2018 August). Again, responsibility for exploitation lies beyond just those who are criminally liable, no matter what one tells oneself to fall asleep at night.

In one instance the author is familiar with, a young woman with developmental disabilities moved into an apartment in an assisted-living facility after living at home with her parents, with whom she had a healthy and appropriate relationship. It is important for contextual purposes to understand that this facility *exclusively* housed and served people with developmental disabilities. This woman's parents visited her for Christmas and New Year's at her apartment. Three months later, they returned for another visit to find her living in her apartment with an unknown male. Upon investigation, it seemed that he had moved in with their daughter that January after they had left, having convinced her that he was her boyfriend.

This did not raise any flags with the facility's staff, nor did the man's seven felony convictions. The three outstanding felony warrants for his arrest also mysteriously slipped their attention, as did the sudden presence of copious amounts of drugs at the facility that just happened to neatly coincide with his arrival. Having been convinced of his love for her, the young woman left the apartment to move in with the obviously totally normal assisted-living facility resident and his equally normal, not-at-all-a-bootlegger of a grandmother. As was the case in a previously described instance, the predator had also convinced the young woman that her parents, family, and friends didn't want her to be an independent adult.

I can't even begin to describe all the red flags that were ignored in this case by people who were literally being paid to pay attention to them. At any time during those three months, a worker could have simply made a single phone call to a supervisor or run a Google search to realize that *something* was amiss. In fact, the dude's face was all

over wanted posters, for crying out loud. There was a reward out for any information about him, and in case it wasn't obvious, he wasn't supposed to be living in the facility in the first place. One didn't need to have sophisticated digital forensics training or extensive law enforcement experience to realize that, again, *something* was not right here. That young woman could easily have been protected. Instead, she was horribly exploited because someone didn't bother to check with their supervisor about the sketchy, unbathed dude with prison tats who suddenly appeared in an otherwise heavily controlled living environment. It's cases like this that remind one of the reason why the A&W third-pound hamburger failed.¹¹

We must do better.

There is a reason why I bring up this case, besides my general concerns about our global societal descent into *Idiocracy*. There is an incredible risk for young women with intellectual disabilities to be sex trafficked, *especially* as minors (Reid, 2018). The relative ease with which offenders can manipulate these particular victims is worth an entire book, as are the unique dynamics between the perpetrators and victims. Suffice it to say that the lack of awareness of this form and frequency of exploitation is a risk in itself, as is the inability of the victims to report or even self-identify as victims. Reid, 2018 makes a strong argument for enhanced criminal penalties for those who engage in the exploitation of this particular population.

Additionally, this case and its sister case that Polaris documented highlight an important theme that the reader is strongly advised to take note of. Both victims had a disability that created circumstances in which they feared being infantilized. Having grown up with a lot of time spent in hospitals, I can relate to what these young women felt probably more than the average reader. Moreover, I know what it feels like to have that fear – and *anger* – exploited; twisted and warped into being the very tip of the spear.¹² This is a recurring theme that the reader must notice: *fear*. Traffickers, predators, abusers, authoritarians, cult leaders, and clandestine government recruiters alike prey upon people's darkest, most innermost fears in order to manipulate them. Whatever one is most afraid of is that person's greatest vulnerability. As Frank Herbert wrote in *Dune*, "fear is the mind-killer."

The reader is encouraged to consult the *American Psychological Association's Report on the Trafficking of Women and Girls* for supplementary insight into the exploitation of mental illness and intellectual disability as a precursor to experiencing slavery. The report identified fetal alcohol exposure as a key determining risk factor that increased a child's vulnerability to sex trafficking. With abnormally high rates of fetal alcohol syndrome being present in Indigenous children across the United States and Canada, these children are particularly vulnerable to experiencing slavery (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014, p. 33). Again, examining this vulnerability provides insight into the compounding nature of vulnerabilities (in this case, race/ethnicity, substance abuse, *and* mental disabilities, with Indigenous women facing the added vulnerability of gender) as well as the critical role of generational trauma in understanding how entire populations come to be predisposed to trafficking and enslavement. I warned you that this is complicated, didn't I?

¹¹ No. 8:13-cr-198-T-24TGW, 2013 WL 11318863 (M.D. Fla. Dec. 11, 2013) for the prosecutors and law enforcement reading this. See also *United States v. Mack*, 808 F.3d 1074, 1082 (6th Cir. 2015). I expect, perhaps naively, to see fewer prosecutions for low level drug possession and

more prosecutions for higher level traffickers now that I have provided this information.

² Predator behavior and psychology is worth an entire volume unto itself, as is the grooming process. I'm building to that.

³ More to the point, in cases of human smuggling the smugglers often force those they are smuggling to transport narcotics as "mules," often via ingestion (Shelley, 2012). Again, the overlap between drug traffickers and human traffickers is clear.

⁴ Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022, p. 110.

⁵ The reader with an advanced understanding of psychology and neuroscience is advised to see Wegner, 2017. This is not light reading, but it remains an essential line of future research that the author of this volume is not qualified to attempt.

⁶ Michaelis, Lundstrom, and Henderson, 2022, pp. 105-106. See also, Meshelemiah & Lynch 2019.

⁷ This is a good time to review the terror management studies in the supplemental resources from chapter three. This will hardly be the last time we witness this phenomenon.

⁸ "Amateurs hack systems, professionals hack people." – Bruce Schneier.

⁹ The resulting change is referred to as epigenetics, which is a chemical imprint upon a person's genes (Erdelyi, 2022). Such changes have been found not only in Indigenous populations, but also in Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, descendants of African slaves in the United States, and in cases of generational trafficking in brothels. The phenomenon and its implications will be discussed in detail the next volume.

¹⁰ Hint.

¹¹ Google it.

¹² "Show the world what you're really capable of; *think of all the good you can do*," said Oppenheimer to the atom.

Chapter 7

The Forgotten: The Overlooked Issue of Elder Abuse

"If you crush a cockroach, you're a hero. If you crush a beautiful butterfly, you're a villain. Morals have aesthetic criteria."

– Friedrich Nietzsche

Much as the modern abolitionist movement demonstrates a clear fetish for addressing sex trafficking at the expense of all other forms of slavery, so too does it hyperfocus on children and young victims of exploitation. There is some method to this madness given the importance of childhood development and the role of adverse childhood experiences upon the rest of the lifespan (don't worry, we'll get to that). Yet this leaves a large population out of consideration. Indeed, those who are in their forties and are labor trafficked or endure organ trafficking barely occupy a blip on an anti-trafficker's radar, assuming they register at all (see DeliverFund, 2024). Everyone wants to save the children, but precious few seem to care about aiding Pablo, the typical garment factory worker. The problem is infinitely worse if a victim is quite literally a dirty old man lying in a hospice bed.

Surprising to many, elder abuse is a form of human trafficking that is disturbingly common and can take many forms (Spore, et al.). Elder abuse consists of abuse of a person 60 or more years old that is inflicted at the hands of a caregiver or other person the elderly person trusts. Generally, this consists of physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse, or simply as neglect. According to the Department of Justice, approximately 5.1% of elderly persons in the United States experience caregiver neglect, 5.2% experience financial exploitation, 4.6% psychological abuse, 0.6% sexual abuse, and 1.6% physical abuse. However, the DOJ cautions that these numbers are vastly underreported since victims are usually reluctant to report abuse (Department of Justice, n.d.). The report estimates that at least 10% of elderly persons will experience elder abuse within a given year, with some experiencing multiple forms. The vast majority of elder abuse occurs among elders who live within the community as opposed to those living in communal living centers; approximately 90% of elderly persons reside within the general community. Rural adults are more likely to display the risk factors of elder abuse, and elders who experience abuse in a community setting are three times more likely to die than those who have not (Dong, et al., 2009).

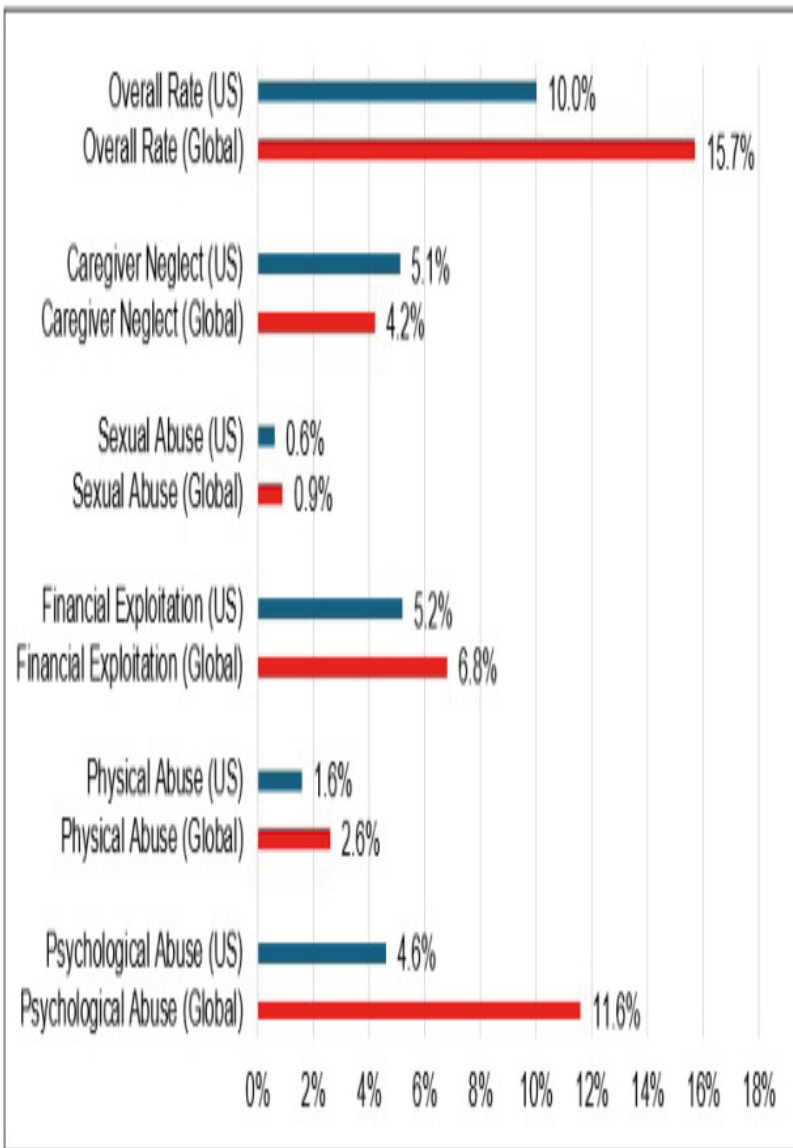


Figure 7.1. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Elder abuse in the U.S. vs globally*, using DOJ and WHO, 2022 self-report data. Note that both sources indicate that these are vast underestimates of the scope of elder abuse, particularly when considered in the context of Spore, et al.

Closely associated with elder abuse is the matter of benefits trafficking, or the

exploitation of a person for the purpose of acquiring their benefits or savings (Spore, et al.). Such benefits may include food stamps, veterans' benefits, Social Security benefits (including SSI and SSDI), and fraudulent charges to Medicare and Medicaid. However, it is worth noting that the author has seen benefits trafficking occur among the disabled, non-elderly population as well. As of this writing, Georgia is the only state in the U.S. to recognize benefits trafficking as a crime. More specifically, it is classified as a form of servitude under the human trafficking statute (GA Code § 16-5-102.1 [2020]). Financial exploitation – including benefits trafficking – is widely considered to be the fastest growing form of abuse and exploitation of the elderly. Potential victims are targeted at locations such as hospitals, churches, and shelters where individuals who receive public benefits can be readily identified (Spore, et al.). After being recruited, they are required to sign over their benefits, often opening themselves up to additional fraud and identity theft.

Due to the fact that only one state considers this to be a crime, there are no statistics available on the prevalence of benefits trafficking. Similarly, information on the prevalence of sex and labor trafficking of older adults is simply nonexistent due to the way this data is collected. For instance, Polaris only lists “48 years old and older” as their top bracket for data collection, while the U.S. D.O.J. Bureau of Justice Statistics is even worse: their top bracket is “35 years of age and older.” In short, we’re potentially missing a large swath of the trafficked population simply due to how we collect and report the respective data, combined with a bias that focuses disproportionately on the young (see DeliverFund, 2024 for an example).

Elder abuse again highlights the intersection of human trafficking with domestic/familial violence and other forms of exploitation and neglect. Often, the predator in these situations is an intimate partner or family member who takes advantage of the power imbalance with the elder. Forcing an older adult to provide childcare through coercive means without proper compensation is a common form of such abuse, as is threatening the individual's independence if they do not comply with demands (PCADV, Human...). A typical trend seen is withholding account, property, or savings information from an older person while misusing assets or property, sometimes to further other instances of criminality or slavery. In the author's experience, this is frequently seen in sex trafficking investigations: one will follow a network's money trail only to find that the trafficker has placed all the dirty assets under a parent, aunt/uncle, or grandparent's name, typically without the older individual's knowledge.¹ Investigators must be alert to the signs of identity theft and fraud in these instances. Certain communities also face unique risks of elder abuse. In communities of color, an abuser may reinforce notions of police brutality and racial injustice in the criminal justice system to keep the elderly person from “snitching” and disclosing the abuse. Among immigrants and refugees, predators may hide, remove, or destroy or threaten to destroy passports, healthcare credentials, ID cards such as driver's licenses or green cards, or paperwork essential to one's immigration status (PCADV, Understanding...). Similarly, predators in the LGBT+ community may threaten to out the individual before that person is ready.

Spore, et al. provides an overview of studies detailing the abuse that occurs within nursing homes in the United States. In a 2000 survey of 2,000 nursing home residents, a remarkable 44% stated that they had experienced abuse, and a mind-numbing 95% stated that they had personally either experienced or witnessed neglect. Compounding

this is a 2010 study that found that 50% of nursing home staff admitted to having either abused or neglected at least one resident in the home they worked in during the prior year. However, these numbers pale in comparison to the global picture outlined by the World Health Organization.

A 2017 meta-analysis of 52 studies spanning 28 different countries estimated that one in six people aged 60 or older experienced some form of abuse during the previous year (WHO, 2022). While data on the global extent of the problem is limited, this analysis provided valuable insight and estimates of the prevalence of such abuse (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1. (WHO, 2022) Elder abuse worldwide.

	Abuse of older people in community settings	Abuse of older people in institutional settings	
Type of abuse	Reported by older adults	Reported by older adults and their proxies	Reported by staff
Overall prevalence	15.7%	Insufficient data	64.2%
Psychological abuse:	11.6%	33.4%	32.5%
Physical abuse:	2.6%	14.1%	9.3%
Financial abuse:	6.8%	13.8%	Insufficient data
Neglect:	4.2%	11.6%	12.0%
Sexual abuse:	0.9%	1.9%	0.7%

also scarce, indicating that this particular area of human trafficking requires much greater attention. However, there are strong indications that the rate of abuse is much higher in these institutions, and that such abuse greatly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for further study becomes even more apparent when another meta-analysis of global data is considered: 64.2% of care staff worldwide self-report perpetrating abuse or neglect of an elderly person in their care within the previous year (WHO, 2022).

Financial exploitation of the elderly, including benefits trafficking, deserves additional attention since it is the single fastest growing form of exploitation of older adults in the United States (Spore, et al.). The estimates of how much this form of abuse costs annually are subject to great debate: according to the FBI, the elderly are scammed of at least \$3 billion every year (WNYT, 2022). Scams are disturbingly ingrained into the nature of slavery, as we'll examine later. In cases of scams that constitute elder abuse, both the person being exploited and the individual doing the exploiting are frequently victims of human trafficking, acting under the auspices of force, fraud, or coercion (see Fig. 11.16). However, this is only one component of the overall cost of elder abuse; elders can be financially exploited in ways that don't involve them being scammed.

Estimates of financial elder abuse vary widely, as reliable information is scant at best. Part of this is due to the methodology in how costs are counted, as well as in how elder abuse is operationally defined. One study authored by MetLife arrived at an overall cost near that of what the FBI reported of \$2.9 billion annually by reviewing media accounts of elder abuse, including Medicaid and Medicare fraud.² However, a report by TrueLink put the figure at \$36 billion by surveying family and caregivers of older people (Stanger, 2015). The TrueLink study also included a much broader definition of financial abuse, such as get-rich-quick schemes and quack medical treatments that preyed upon the elderly. The National Council on Aging estimates the figure to be from \$2.6 billion to \$36.5 billion (National Council on Aging, 2021). The Government Accountability Office's figures are even more scattershot, ranging from \$1.7 billion to \$50 billion, that is, up to one billion dollars per state (Spore, et al.).³

Human trafficking schemes can take numerous, quasilegal forms, and elder abuse is no exception. Much as youth can be placed under the care of an adult guardian, so too can an elderly person who is no longer able to care for themselves. The guardianship system is meant to protect these people, but as is the case with the youth guardianship system, exploitation can easily occur. Per the AARP, approximately 1.5 million elderly adults lived under some form of guardianship as of 2013. Only Idaho and Minnesota track the amount of assets under control of appointed guardians, with the assets for those under guardianship totaling over \$1 billion for both states combined, in 2013 dollars (Karp & Wood, 2013).⁴ The GAO identified hundreds of cases of abuse and neglect occurring in the twenty-year period between 1990 and 2010; of the twenty such cases that the GAO examined in detail, guardians exploited over \$5.4 million in financial assets from 158 impaired elderly victims (GAO, 2010).

Generally, family members are given priority when it comes to guardianship decisions. However, when family members themselves are deemed unfit or there is simply disagreement among them, some states such as Florida allow "professional" guardians to be named in their place. In these instances, families are often not even notified that there is a hearing until it is too late to matter. To make things worse,

Florida law allows for anyone to petition a court to declare an elderly person “incapacitated” and appoint a guardian, and the courts are typically so overloaded with such petitions that they cannot carefully consider the facts of each case.

Such a case occurred in 2016. On August 30, the court-appointed Emergency Temporary Guardian for an 87-year-old woman absconded with her while her niece was in the adjacent room, filling out papers. On the woman’s birthday a week later, her family had no idea where she was: the court’s legally appointed guardian wouldn’t tell them. Unbeknownst to the family and despite the fact that the now 88-year-old had previously been in good health in her Palm Coast home where she had safely resided for the past twenty years, the guardian had removed her and “placed” her into an assisted-living facility. Three doctor’s reports detailing the woman’s good health had been obscured through a shell-game of legal loopholes. There, sedated, she awaited while the guardian petitioned for plenary guardianship which would deprive the woman of her last two legally recognized rights: the right to vote and the right to socialize with whom she chose (Kennedy, 2017).

By that point more than a dozen attorneys had filed claims against the woman’s assets for services rendered. However, the legal guardian had not paid any of those bills nor had she allowed any of the woman’s own money to be released to pay for food, rent, or personal living expenses. The woman’s sister and over fifty additional family members had been completely shut out in favor of an anonymous, government-appointed official. This was especially traumatizing for all involved given the nature of how this nightmare had first started a remarkable four years earlier in 2012. The now-88-year-old had then been declared “incapacitated” after being held against her will by a family friend for a period of eight months in that year, having to eventually reach a phone and call 911 to escape with police assistance (Kennedy, 2017).

This would seem unbelievable if it were not one of countless similar documented cases. The abuse and corruption have become so widespread that in 2019 a group of adult children sued the State of Florida (Yates, 2019). They claimed that the system of adult guardianship had become hijacked through judicial rulings and case law that created an organized crime racket sponsored by the state government. The court filings in these cases are chilling, documenting a standardized process through which elders are systematically removed from the legal care of their families, and their assets, estate, social security funds, 401k’s, cars, homes, jewelry, and more are subsequently liquidated (Yates, 2019). Once the assets have been (completely legally) redistributed by the guardians, the seniors in these cases are abused and neglected to death, being intentionally denied medical care, starved, or being prescribed lethal doses of already highly toxic psychotropic medication. It is the perfect system of exploitation, with euthanasia having clearly made it into the policy of America’s sunshine state.

This pattern of systematic neglect and abuse is notably present in America’s nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Much as with other forms of human trafficking, the COVID-19 pandemic gravely intensified these existing trends of exploitation, granting us insight into the inner workings of this otherwise invisible form of slavery. By November 25, 2020, nearly eight months into the pandemic, approximately 90,000 elderly Americans in long-term residential care facilities around the nation had died of the disease (Lopez, 2020). Yet, across approximately 15,000 of these facilities a secondary wave of death and disease was occurring: for every two victims of COVID-19, another

elder died prematurely of neglect as nursing home staff found themselves increasingly ill and unable to care for the swelling numbers of afflicted. These “excess deaths” totaled at least 40,000 by December 2020. One 75-year-old man dropped to a mere 98 pounds before his death due to a combination of dehydration and malnourishment, causing his son to remark that he looked like a victim from a concentration camp: “He couldn’t even hold his head up straight because he had gotten so weak ... They stopped taking care of him. They abandoned him” (Lopez, 2020). The 75-year-old likely choked on food, having not gotten the help he needed to eat.

Such problems in nursing homes were not limited to the United States. Canadian nursing homes suffered from similar abuses and instances of neglect. Elderly residents were found wandering halls in soiled diapers, dehydrated and malnourished like the 75-year-old mentioned previously (Muscedere & Williams, 2020). The Canadian Armed Forces were deployed to care facilities for the elderly early on in the pandemic to assist with the staffing shortage, and their reports were simply shocking: cockroach infestations, spoiled and rotting food, and complete disregard for even the most basic cleanliness standards were the norm. In a report issued later that year, the Canadian Armed Forces also detailed how medical equipment was used on patients infected with COVID-19 and then on those without the disease without first being disinfected, resulting in further spread of the virus (Carter, 2020). There were numerous indications that the provincial government knew about the abuses, neglect, and shortfalls occurring in these facilities, but it took an actual, honest-to-goodness military intervention to expose them to the public.

This became all the more ominous given the intersection of vulnerabilities seen in the older population in Canada, which is home to a large Indigenous population. Approximately one in four Canadians over age 65 suffer from frailty, a medical condition that increases the chance of complications from even minor infections, leading to severe impacts up to and including death. Frail individuals are more likely to suffer long-term effects of infection and are more likely to be institutionalized. The proportion of Indigenous Canadians over 65 with frailty is roughly 50%, twice the national number (Muscedere & Williams, 2020).

By February of 2023, COVID-19 had killed more than 163,000 nursing home residents in the United States, and this was by all accounts likely a gross underestimate. Part of the reason the death toll was so high was due to the systemic warehousing of older persons in shared rooms in these facilities. When one person in a room caught the virus, it was like lighting a match amidst highly flammable tinder – a wildfire started and spread uncontrolled. Adding insult to injury is the fact that it was all ridiculously predictable and simultaneously preventable. Residents of so-called “Green Houses,” more residential-style facilities with private rooms, experience significantly reduced rates of hospitalization, are 45% less likely to require catheters, and are 16% less likely to be bedridden (Paulin, 2023). Additionally, these facilities report lower medical costs, lower staff turnover, greater quality of life for residents, and far better COVID-19 outcomes. Indeed, COVID-19 infection rates in facilities with 50 or more residents are a stunning nine times higher than those living in “Green” houses due to the existence of private rooms combined with the fact that fewer persons live and work in these homes (Paulin, 2023).

The scientific evidence is almost overwhelming on this point. A study examining

crowding in 618 nursing homes in Ontario, Canada found that the COVID-19 mortality of residents who caught the virus in uncrowded facilities was less than half of those who lived in crowded ones (Brown, et al, 2020). The authors concluded that shared housing was associated with both larger and deadlier outbreaks of the disease. However, these findings were not limited to COVID-19.

The 2020 study on COVID-19 and warehousing in nursing homes led to a retrospective study in 2023 that examined outbreaks of respiratory infections in Ontario facilities between 2014 and 2019. The data included 64,829 cases and 1,969 premature deaths caused by such infections, across 588 facilities. The authors found that these numbers would have been cut by more than half if private rooms had been implemented (Leece, et al., 2023). The implications of this finding are visibly quite enormous. This raises an obvious question: if the evidence is so overwhelmingly in favor of one person per room, why haven't private rooms caught on as a solution to the trafficking and warehousing of the elderly?

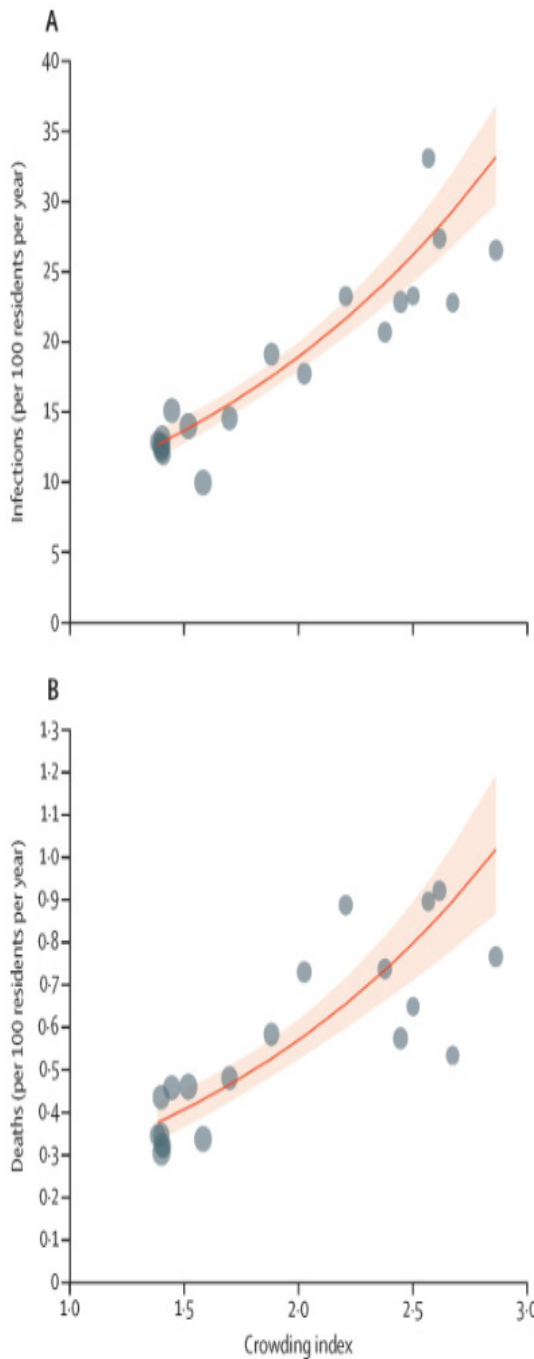


Figure 7.2. (Leece, et al., 2023) Crowding in nursing homes leads to increased deaths among residents.

Don't play dumb, dear reader; you know perfectly well where this is going. As we

saw in the introduction, human trafficking is a financial crime motivated by greed, often facilitated by technology (Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021). This particular form of trafficking is no different. The reality is that it's simply much cheaper for nursing homes to house residents in shared units. For those who own the facilities human life is, again, cheapened and commodified for the sake of the almighty dollar, an argument that frequently arose throughout the pandemic (Paulin, 2023; Rodriguez, 2020). Yet again one can see just how much of the economy is utterly dependent upon slavery, and how resistant society is to change this fact.

Of course, as we have seen, some lives are valued more than others. The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) performed an analysis of COVID-19 deaths that occurred in Illinois nursing homes between March 2020 and July 2020 (the so-called "first wave" of the pandemic). The study revealed that a startling 40% more Black and Hispanic residents in Illinois nursing homes died than would otherwise have been expected (Olsen, 2021).⁶ The HFS report was one of the first to highlight the racial and ethnic disparities in which elderly residents are housed in long-term care facilities, stressing that ethnic minorities were more likely than Whites to be warehoused in three- and four-person bedrooms.⁷ Per the report, during the first five months of the COVID-19 pandemic 60% of all deaths of Medicaid patients in long-term care facilities in Illinois happened in facilities where at least 10% were in rooms with three or more people. Prior to the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine which dramatically reduced the mortality rate, over half of all COVID-19 deaths in the state involved nursing home residents.

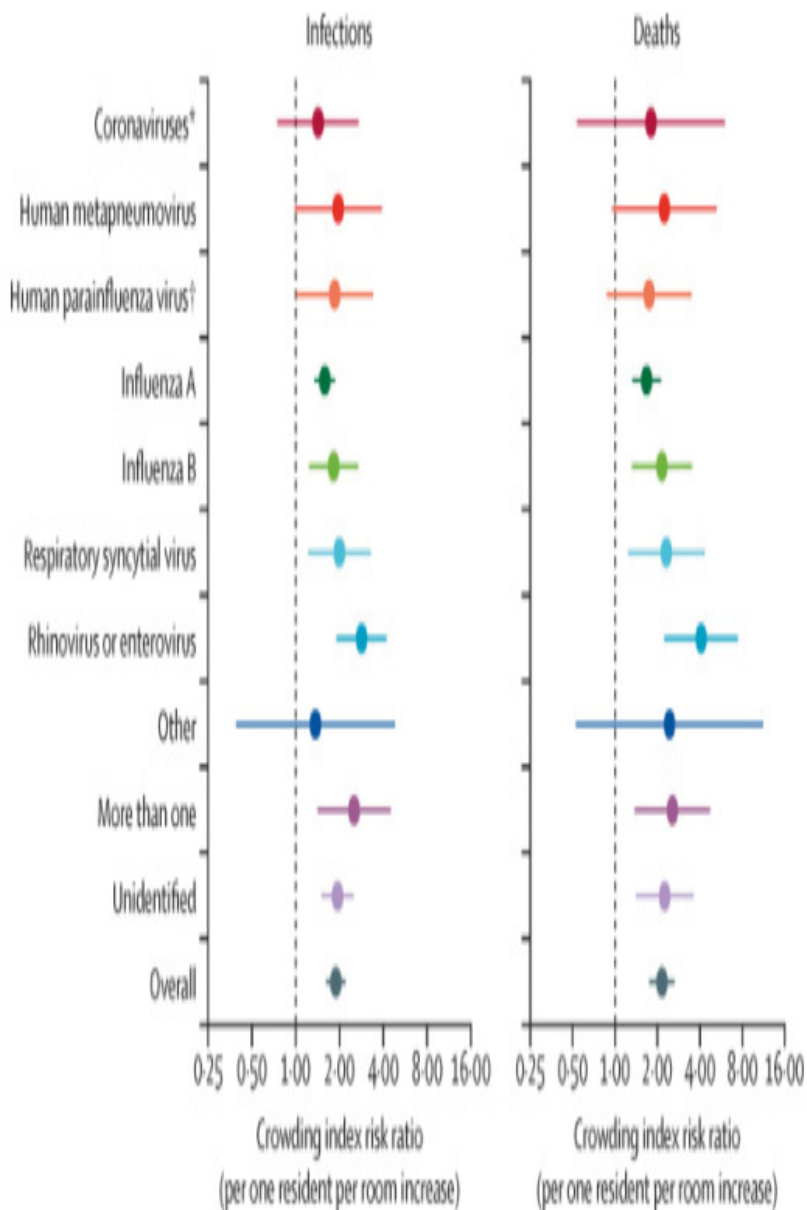


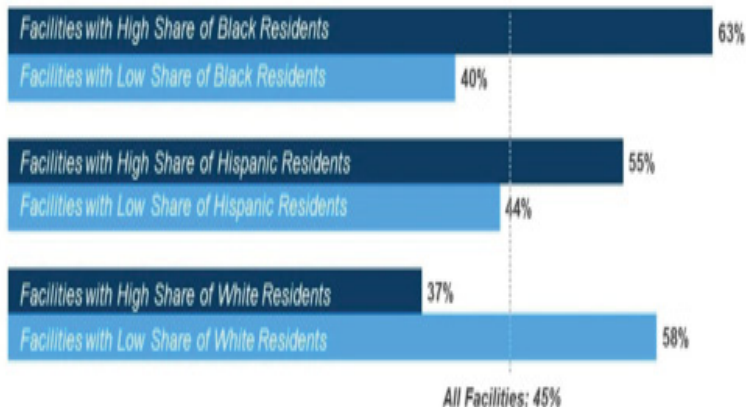
Figure 7.3. (Leece, et al., 2023) Crowding in nursing homes leads to higher infections and deaths among residents.

Overcrowding wasn't the sole factor behind the virus rampaging through these

facilities. A 2020 study of data from nearly 14,000 nursing homes nationwide revealed significant racial and ethnic disparities in both numbers of COVID-19 cases and numbers of related deaths among these facilities (Chidambaram, Neuman, & Garfield, 2020). Deaths related to the coronavirus were more numerous among facilities with relatively high proportions of Black or Hispanic residents. The number of COVID-19 infections showed a similar disparity, although with smaller differences than for reported deaths.

In a similar study, the racial and ethnic composition of the surrounding community also played a significant role (Cai, Yan, & Intrator, 2021). Nursing homes that had a high-minority population saw a greater mortality rate than did those that had a low-minority population. However, this was additionally compounded by the ethnic makeup of the surrounding community: nursing homes that existed in high-minority communities yet housed a low-minority population saw far greater mortality among residents than did high-minority homes located in low-minority communities.

Share of Nursing Homes With At Least One COVID-19 Death (as of October 11, 2020):

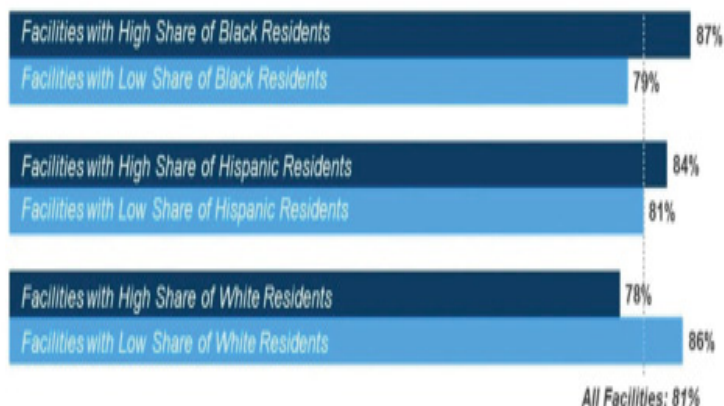


NOTES: Includes 13,982 nursing homes for which race/ethnicity data were available for all groups and for which resident cases or deaths were not > total number of beds. High share of Black residents or Hispanic residents refers to 20% or more. High share of White residents is 80% or more. Facilities may fall into more than one of these groups.

SOURCE: KFF analysis of Shaping Long Term Care in America Project at Brown University funded in part by the National Institute on Aging (1P01AG027296), CMS COVID-19 Nursing Home Data (as of October 11, 2020)

KFF

Share of Nursing Homes With At Least One Coronavirus Case (as of October 11, 2020):



NOTES: Includes 13,982 nursing homes for which race/ethnicity data were available for all groups and for which resident cases or deaths were not > total number of beds. High share of Black residents or Hispanic residents refers to 20% or more. High share of White residents is 80% or more. Facilities may fall into more than one of these groups.

SOURCE: KFF analysis of Shaping Long Term Care in America Project at Brown University funded in part by the National Institute on Aging (1P01AG027296), CMS COVID-19 Nursing Home Data (as of October 11, 2020)

KFF

Figure 7.4. (Chidambaram, Neuman, & Garfield, 2020) *The effect of racial disparities on nursing home COVID-19 deaths and cases.*

This is due to many systemic factors, chief among them being that long-term care

facilities located in high-minority communities are more likely to be resource deprived since these communities tend to be poorer across the board. Indeed, Cai, Yan, & Intrator, 2021 documented extensive research showing that the race and ethnicity of a community is associated with individual living conditions, socioeconomic status, health behavior (actions that can directly affect health outcomes), health belief (what people believe about their health), and health status (what people's health is). Higher staffing levels of RNs were found to be strongly associated with better quality of care in nursing homes. Additionally, in high-minority communities, nursing homes that relied more heavily on CNAs instead of RNs for their staffing needs were positively associated with increased infections and death occurring among residents from COVID-19.

Again, the connection to – and human cost of – drained-pool politics becomes ever more clear as it pertains to the issue of human trafficking (McGhee, 2022; Cai, Yan, & Intrator, 2021; Metzl, 2020). The relationship between RN staffing and COVID-19 rates was particularly important for facilities that were located in high-minority communities: communities which are statistically much more likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged. Individuals from these communities don't typically have the opportunity to pursue the four-year degree an RN license requires, but rather the much shorter (and far cheaper) CNA license.⁸ This leads to a whole host of reasons why even those residing in low-minority nursing homes but located in high-minority communities experienced higher COVID-19 mortality rates than those in high-minority homes in low-minority communities.

The overwhelming majority of staff in long-term care facilities are CNAs. Of these CNAs, approximately half are either Black or Hispanic (Cai, Yan, & Intrator, 2021). CNAs are more likely than RNs to be from the communities where care facilities are located: these communities are thus likely to be more economically underdeveloped and suffer from higher COVID-19 rates as a result. This, in turn, amplifies the risk of cross-infection among CNAs, residents, and other staff members. Additionally, many CNAs live in poverty – this increases the odds that they make use of public transportation to get to work, increasing their exposure to COVID-19 and other respiratory infection outbreaks. To add insult to injury, care facilities in high-minority communities are much more likely to suffer from resource deprivation – they simply lack the capacity in many cases to implement necessary infection control and prevention (ICP) protocols, facilitating a greater chance of cross-infection between caregivers and residents.

Long-term care facilities for the elderly are also notoriously understaffed (Lopez, 2020; Olsen, 2021). In Illinois in particular, facility owners argued quite successfully for a number of years that the state's low Medicaid rates were largely to blame for the problem. Indeed, the Illinois General Assembly increased funding for nursing homes three times in the years leading up to the pandemic to help long-term care facilities meet minimum staffing levels, including a massive \$70 million appropriation in 2019, but with little sign of improvement. The data presented in the HFS report demonstrated that facilities which housed a high percentage of Medicaid residents, “are profiting on low staffing and room crowding” (Olsen, 2021).

The true nature of the nursing home industry in the United States (and arguably Canada) has now fully been revealed: it's a criminal racket, not a model of care. The whole system appears more like that of an organized crime syndicate than a network of experts and professionals, much as the corruption of the elder guardianship system in

Florida revealed. Yet, as if this were not bad enough, the problem gets even worse when one realizes that it's not just the elderly population and their families that these operations exploit. Indeed, it seems as if this is by design of the industry: the systemic and systematic understaffing of these institutions has created opportunities for labor traffickers to enter the market, taking advantage of vulnerable workers to fill this vacuum while pocketing even greater profits. Once again, the problem of drained-pool politics becomes paramount as one looks to the conditions and practices the chronically overworked and understaffed workers are forced to labor in.

Labor trafficking is particularly common in nursing homes across the country. These industries tend to practice a form of debt bondage to keep their workers enslaved. The 2019 case against SensotaCare, the largest long-term care provider in New York, provides insight into this commonplace abuse (Purdue, 2022). The initial complaint focused on thirty women from the Philippines who were recruited to work in a nursing home in the United States. At first excited to move and work in the U.S., the women were shocked to learn that they would owe SensotaCare \$25,000 each if they left their job. Of course, the women could never hope to earn that much since they were paid significantly less than their peers. In fact, in some nursing homes trafficked caregivers have been paid only \$2.00 - \$3.50 an hour (Gollan, 2019). The case against SensotaCare grew to include over 200 individual plaintiffs before the judge in the case ruled that the company had violated the TVPA (Brevda, 2019; Purdue 2022).

Nonetheless, it is unclear if SensotaCare has stopped these abusive practices. In addition to suing SensotaCare, the workers also filed civil suits against two other nursing homes in New York City: Golden Gate Rehabilitation and Health Center on Staten Island and Spring Creek Nursing and Rehabilitation Center located in Brooklyn (Brevda, 2019). The court filings revealed an alarming pattern: the Nassau County Supreme Court was aware of the debt bondage schemes these companies were engaged in as early as 2010. Yet the companies continued to engage in such slave labor practices unhindered nine years later.

One of reasons for such unhampered abuse is the fact that practically anyone can enter the business. In California for instance, elder care facility administrators need only take an 80-hour course and complete an open-book test to be able to open their own facility (Gollan, 2019). Additionally, if there are fewer than fifteen people in a facility, the administrator merely needs a high school diploma or G.E.D. For comparison, a manicurist in the state requires 400 hours of training before they can take the state board exam. This incredibly low barrier to entry has allowed many unscrupulous individuals to gain a foothold in the industry. One entrepreneur on YouTube was even quoted as saying that opening a nursing home is a simple way, "to turn a single-family home into a cash-flow machine" (Sokolove Law Firm, 2019).

Elder care owners are thus able to use ineffective labor laws and regulations to traffic employees. In fact, this slavery is practically built into the foundations of the nursing home industry through a simple premise: hire as few people as possible and make sure they can't leave. Perhaps no one can explain this better than a lobbyist for the elder care industry, George Kutnerian:

There is no staffing ratio. A lot of people think, "I can't have one caregiver alone." That's not true. You gotta learn how to use one caregiver... care homes with just one caregiver on duty can require that

worker to stay for rest and meal breaks. If you have two caregivers there, they have to be able to leave. It's more efficient, okay?⁹

One can't help but be reminded of the International Labour Organization's argument about prison labor: it's legal, so it doesn't count as slavery. Evidently, logic doesn't matter and words are suddenly devoid of meaning. Hence, we begin to see the true danger in the ILO's approach to this issue as outlined in the third chapter, and the importance of a consistent approach to the threat that slavery poses.

A 2019 report by the Center for Investigative Reporting revealed the scope of these abuses in the industry. On top of the abysmally (read: illegally) low pay, workers are subject to wage theft in an alarming number of ways, pushing many further into abject poverty (Gollan, 2019). Debt bondage schemes ensure that workers can't leave, as per lobbyists' advice. Many facilities charge at least \$25 a day to their workers via a "lodging fee" while insisting that employees sleep on site: be it on a couch, in an empty garage, or on the bare floor. This contributes to inhumane working hours: interviewed caregivers reported rising before dawn to scrub toilets, cook meals, and shower residents while being sleep deprived at night, having to dispense painkillers, change diapers, return wandering dementia patients to their rooms, and shift the bedridden every two hours to prevent bedsores (Gollan, 2019). The exploited are rarely allowed time off even in the most dire circumstances, and when they are, they are forced to pay their substitutes to fill in for them. Two anonymous interviewees detailed in the report described having miscarriages after being denied time off or being forced to conduct heavy lifting while pregnant.

One might be asking how companies are able to get away with this, and that's a good question to ask. In 2013, 30-year-old Stephanie Costa appeared on Bravo's *Millionaire Matchmaker*. Costa was the owner of Bedford Care Homes, which a mere three months later was sued for over \$1.6 million for labor violations (Sokolove Law Team, 2019). By filing for bankruptcy and having ownership of the company rotate between herself and her parents, Costa was eventually able to settle for a mere \$200,000, a \$1.4 million difference.

Costa's case reveals an alarming trend when it comes to slavery in America: the penalties simply aren't high enough to act as a deterrent. Companies return to business-as-usual because, even if they get caught trafficking in persons, the fine they pay simply pales in comparison to the profit they've made along the way. There is no incentive to obey the law, while at the same time there is every incentive to utilize slave labor. The 2019 report found that corporations merely shift ownership or re-open under a new name to avoid consequences while racking up violations, as was the case with Costa (Gollan, 2019; Sokolove Law Team, 2019). Much to this point is the fact that the investigative team discovered, in California alone, at least twenty nursing home companies had been found guilty of wage theft and yet continued to operate illegally.

As we've seen with vulnerabilities, all of this exploitation compounds upon itself. The problems start at the very foundations of the elder care system: when direct care staff are not properly compensated and provided for by employers, this trickles down into the routine, day-to-day care of the elderly patients (Brevda, 2019). This becomes all the more obvious when we realize that these caregivers are often effectively slave laborers, and if one is overworked, sleep deprived, and in poor health, then one is going to make mistakes. From the plantations of the Antebellum South to the mass production

lines of the Nazi regime, slave labor has proven remarkably inefficient due to being highly prone to both mistakes and intentional sabotage (see Faure, 2015). Add in cost-cutting measures designed to pack as many older persons as possible into as little space as possible while spending the absolute least amount of money possible to keep them clean, safe, and healthy and one has the perfect recipe for a “cash-flow machine.”

Thus, it's really no surprise that elders are so frequently abused and neglected in these facilities – so, too, are the very people trusted to care for them. That's hardly a good way to ensure a top-notch standard of care. If workers don't want to be there, and are, in fact, forced against their will to be there, they're not going to do a very good job. In fact, they'll cut corners and neglect their duties, which in this case just happen to be to care for living, breathing human beings. Should that structure be stressed even the slightest bit, it would collapse like the house of cards that it truly is, resulting in a catastrophic loss of life. It's almost as if the entire system we've built, pride ourselves on, and swear to defend is built upon the exploitation of the weakest and most vulnerable among us.

Speaking of which...

¹ The investigator is advised not to make assumptions, however. In some instances of familial trafficking, the older adult is an accomplice, and sometimes even the primary offender.

² The authors were quick to note that the number represented what they felt to be only the tip of the iceberg, and that the real number was likely much higher (Stanger, 2015).

³ For those keeping track, feel free to add these numbers of exploited persons and dollars lost to the amounts discussed in the previous chapters.

⁴ We need updated data: the potential for fraud and exploitation is enormous, and no one is watching the funds.

⁵ The timeline is particularly interesting when the right to vote is examined; see Kennedy, 2017 for further details.

⁶ Remember, as per Leece, et al., 2023, these findings aren't just relevant to times of a global crisis, but during times of regular respiratory illness as well.

⁷ See (Rodriguez, 2020) and consider the obvious eugenical context.

⁸ For reference, a RN requires a four-year degree and additional certification, costing \$40,000 - \$200,000. A CNA license takes about a month to get and costs around \$500, with many community organizations often footing the entire bill.

⁹ Quoted in (Sokolove Law Team, 2019).

Chapter 8

Poverty as a Driving Factor of Slavery

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

Billy Joe Cain, anti-trafficking activist and co-founder of PBJ Learning, often describes poverty as being “the biggest pimp.” I am strongly inclined to agree with him. No other single factor lures individuals into situations of exploitation and slavery quite like the promise of the American Dream, and no other factor *keeps* them enslaved more than the ruthless cycles of trafficking and poverty.

Poverty as a Risk Multiplier

The results of a 2023 National Survivors’ Survey conducted by Polaris provide immense insight into this reality. A remarkable 83% of survivors came from impoverished backgrounds, having experienced childhood poverty in some form (Polaris, 2023). This, however, is but one part of the equation: while trafficking victims are largely drawn from the impoverished underclasses, their experiences and traumatization in slavery reinforce their socioeconomic status, *keeping* them in poverty throughout their lifetime.

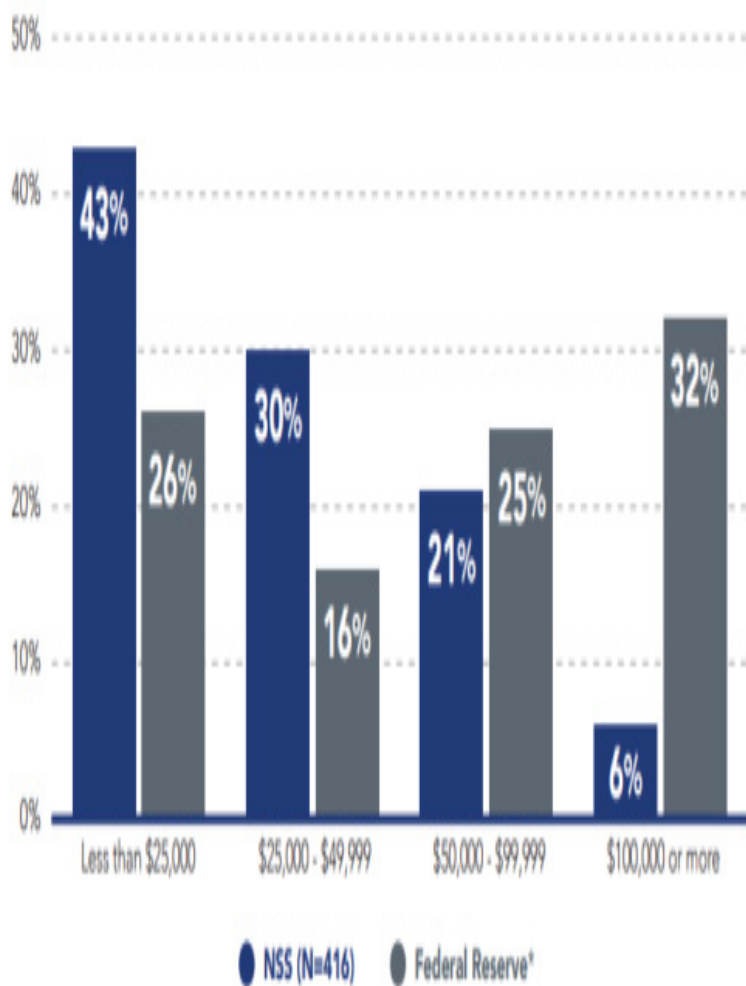


Figure 8.1. (Polaris, 2023) *Distribution of annual household income of trafficking survivors (blue) compared to that of the general population (gray).* A particularly useful insight into the nature of slavery and perpetration can be gained by overlaying this data with the information found in (Demand Abolition, 2018, p. 19). See also Figs. 8.3 and 8.28.

This creates an unending cycle of exploitation: poverty renders people vulnerable to

exploitation, which in turn makes the victims more likely to become or remain in poverty. This feedback loop is worsened by the fact that people in poverty tend to stay in poverty, and those who have been exploited once are at increased risk of being exploited again. Additional research is needed for this dynamic to be better understood and mitigated.

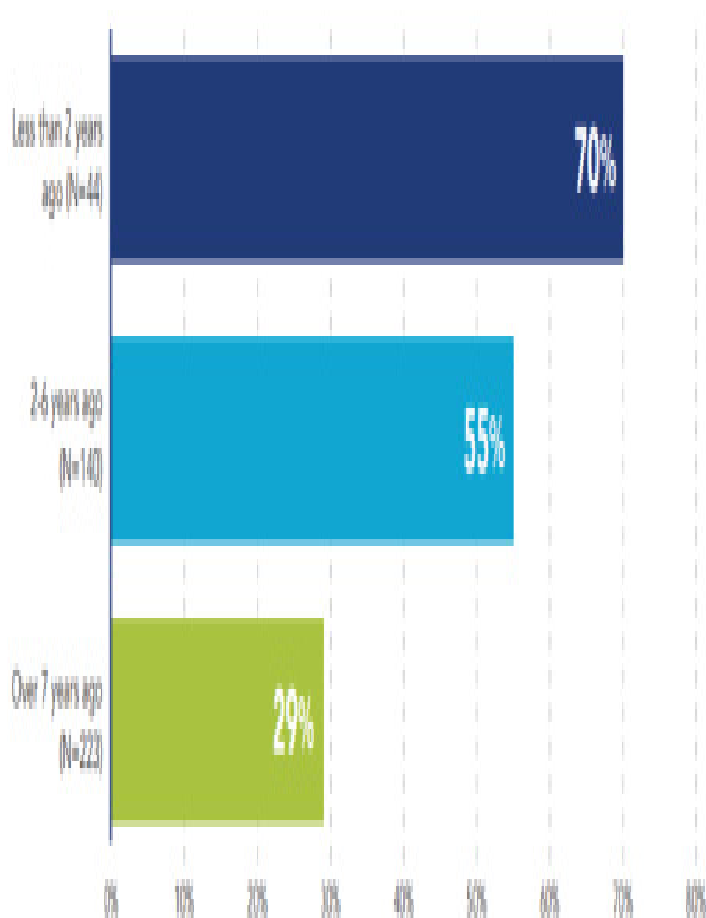


Figure 8.2. (Polaris, 2023) Survivors who made less than \$25,000/year by the time of exiting their trafficking situation.

vulnerabilities that a victim may have, increasing their odds of being trafficked. Regardless of whether a survivor experienced sex or labor trafficking (and it's important to note that many experienced *both*), around 45% of each population made less than \$25,000 annually (Polaris, 2023). Hispanic and Indigenous survivors reported earning under \$25,000 at rates exceeding 50% for both racial groups. Similarly, over 50% of those victims who suffered from a disability also reported earning less than \$25,000. Among survivors living in rural locations 44% reported an income of less than \$25,000 annually. Sexual minorities (LGBT+ persons) also reported earnings under the \$25,000 threshold at a fifty percent rate. In short, those who present with additional vulnerabilities beyond that of merely experiencing poverty are more likely to experience poverty in the first place, thus being more vulnerable to trafficking and abuse of all kinds in an ever-compounding feedback loop.

Many impoverished individuals find themselves engaging in **survival sex**, which is sex in exchange for basic necessities such as mere food or shelter (Murphy, 2016, pg. 18). Extreme poverty drives many to engage in such sex as a mechanism to simply survive; Murphy, 2016 documented the case of a young woman who first engaged in survival sex at age 15 to put shoes on her own feet when her mother couldn't afford to do so. This is critically important to understand: anyone who engages in survival sex is, by definition, a sex trafficking victim under the TVPA, due to the coerced nature of the sex involved and the material exchange taking place.¹ This is due in part to how a commercial sex act is defined in 22 U.S.C. § 7102(4). A "commercial sex act" is:

Any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

"Value" here has been interpreted by the courts to mean *anything* that a person values. This is not limited to something of financial value, but is much broader in definition: food, shelter, and mere survival qualify, as does emotional support and/or a sense of belonging, which is especially common in the grooming process. Commercial sex acts as defined above are, of course, codified in the TVPA as "sex trafficking" per 22 U.S.C. § 7102(12).

Relationships and interactions in which survival sex occurs are characterized by power, control, and coercion. This is all the more evident when the trafficker maintains control over food or other resources needed by the impoverished victim (Schwarz, et al., 2018). Survival sex is frequently not self-initiated, but rather required by the person supplying the resources (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014). High proportions of the homeless population can be found engaging in survival sex, with numbers being particularly high among youth, women, and LGBT+ homeless populations (Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021; Murphy, 2016; see also Greenwood, 2019). Without the resources or income needed to pay for basic necessities, runaway, impoverished, and homeless youth are far more likely to engage in such transactional sex than their peers – increasing their vulnerability to traffickers who appear to offer the immediate sustenance they need (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014).

The role of homelessness and housing insecurity as a driving factor of slavery and entry into trafficking scenarios cannot be overstated. It is also the largest area of need for survivors, particularly for those who have just recently exited or who are seeking to escape their trafficking situation (Finger, 2021). The lack of stable and secure housing (combined with the underlying factor of poverty) contributes significantly to individuals'

vulnerabilities that lead to them being exploited, especially among younger populations. Poverty cripples an individual's agency, and these desperate conditions push people who are homeless to make decisions and choices that they otherwise might not make (Singleton, 2019). The crushing weight of their circumstances may make them feel forced to take a job opportunity that seems too good to be true (the single most common entry point into trafficking; Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021), accept a ride offered by a predatory stranger, or engage in survival sex simply to have a roof over their head for the night.

Affordable Housing, Homelessness, and Chains-of-Risk

However, it is important to realize that just being poor or homeless does not mean that one will necessarily be subject to experiencing slavery any more than being Hispanic or being female does. There are a lot of poor people who have never been trafficked, just as there are a lot of poor Hispanic women in particular who have never been trafficked or exploited. What we are talking about when we talk about compounding vulnerabilities is *risk*. There is simply no single risk factor or vulnerability that predestines an individual for being trafficked. Rather, it is the complex interplay of compounding risk factors and vulnerabilities that increases an individual's unique risk to experiencing slavery and other forms of abuse (Schwarz, et al., 2018).

This indicates that risk scores for both populations and individuals should be researched and calculated to uniquely tailor responses and allocate limited aid to those who need it most. This would better address the issue of slavery from a root-level perspective. To this end, Schwarz, et al., (2018) recommend adopting a chains-of-risk model, explaining that,

Chains-of-risk refer to 'a sequence of linked exposures that raise disease risk because one bad experience or exposure tends to lead to another and then another.' According to this framework, exposure to adverse or beneficial experiences mounts up over time, acting as mechanisms that increase the likelihood of more adverse or beneficial experiences. Exposure to adverse experiences may increase the probability of sequential and additive exposure to more adverse experiences; different risks may compound and create substantial challenges. For example, unemployment and poverty create financial instability, which may increase the risks people take in looking for income and add to the likelihood of experiencing exploitation. Chains-of-risk can also facilitate a more prevention-centered understanding of anti-trafficking efforts and focus on upstream solutions to risk factors.²

Poverty serves as a "tipping point" for other vulnerabilities to slavery. Financial instability compounds other exposures to create circumstances which others in a more secure situation exploit. Poverty creates a desperate situation from which people make irrational decisions and accept great risks to escape. They may undertake a dangerous journey to seek a better life as immigrants or accept debts that they must later pay off through labor exploitation (Schwarz, et al., 2018). Again, we can see how poverty and economic instability limit one's agency and actions. As one community organizer explained,

If you've got children to support and parents to take care of, you would

volunteer to work for a Chinese restaurant for \$400 a month. You would agree to be locked in the apartment and transferred back and forth because \$400 a month is better than no hundred dollars.³

Another expert quoted in the same source made the connection between trafficking and poverty undeniably clear:

If poverty were eliminated then we wouldn't need to be here.
Essentially, trafficking is an outgrowth of poverty.

All the evidence from across the literature appears to support this claim. As rent and home prices skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness also spiked, leaving many suddenly vulnerable to the whims of traffickers, especially as homelessness was criminalized (Phillips, 2022; Swain, 2020). The connection between market dynamics and patterns of human trafficking is undeniable (Reuland, 2010). The rate of urgent calls to Polaris' human trafficking hotline during the first wave of COVID-19 further illustrates this relationship. The number of crisis calls to the hotline – calls that require law enforcement, shelter, or transportation within twenty-four hours – increased by forty percent after shelter-in-place orders went into effect; however, crisis calls to the hotline in which individuals needed emergency shelter nearly doubled after shelter-in-place orders took effect (Polaris, 2020).

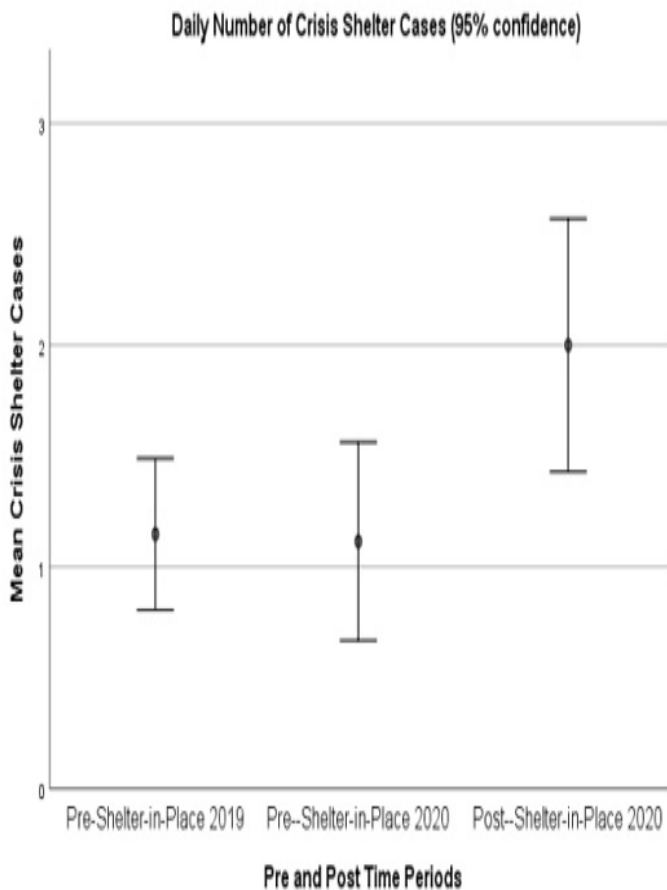


Figure 8.4. (Polaris, 2020) *Pandemic effect on number of crisis calls to Human Trafficking Hotline.*

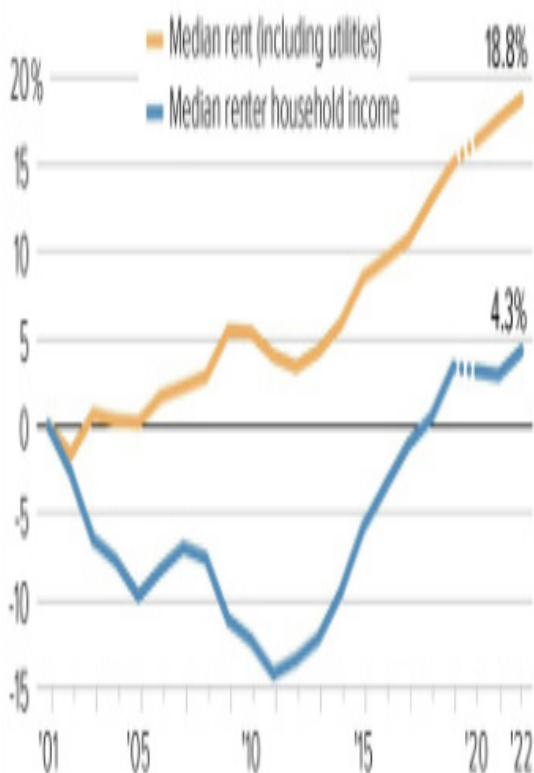
This analysis demonstrates two separate but important phenomena. First, to the point mentioned previously, is that housing insecurity is a risk factor for being predisposed to human trafficking. Having access to affordable housing significantly reduces this risk, as individuals are better able to avoid exploitative situations. The second insight to be gained is that trafficking victims were trapped at home with their traffickers during the pandemic-era lockdowns, revealing the familial nature of many trafficking situations. A lack of affordable housing keeps these victims enslaved and economically dependent upon the whims of their traffickers. One can easily see how people are forced to consider such means of subsistence as survival sex. A 2024 study conducted by Lederer, Chandler, and Stinson confirmed this relationship, finding that (among other things) only a paltry 11% of trafficking victims surveyed reported being housed in a private residence during their time being trafficked, whereas 69% reported sheltering in an abandoned building/drug house, 11% resided in a motel, and 9% reported “other” (Lederer, Chandler, & Stinson, 2024, p. 10). It is important to note that the 11% who reported being housed in a private residence did not necessarily own or rent the residence.

Every \$100 increase in median rent is associated with a 9% increase in the

homelessness rate, per the GAO. High inflation only makes this problem worse. The national median rent reached a record \$2,002 in May 2022, up a disturbing 15.9% from \$1,738 just a year prior (Bhattarai & Seigel, 2022; Hall, 2022). Rent steadily increased between January 2014 and January 2021, when it suddenly spiked. This spike disproportionately affected persons of color and low-income households, two descriptors that have substantial overlap. A survey of renters revealed that approximately half of those falling behind on rent stated that they were “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to be evicted. The majority of these were either Black or Hispanic (Hall, 2022). The data indicated that this sentiment was not due to unemployment but rather to the respondents not earning enough to cover their expenses, thus raising the issue of how low, stagnant wages impact the larger picture.

Renters' Incomes Haven't Caught Up to Rising Housing Costs

Percent change since 2001, adjusted for inflation



Source: CBPP tabulations of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey

Note: Dashed line indicates missing 2020 1-year ACS data due to pandemic-related data collection issues.

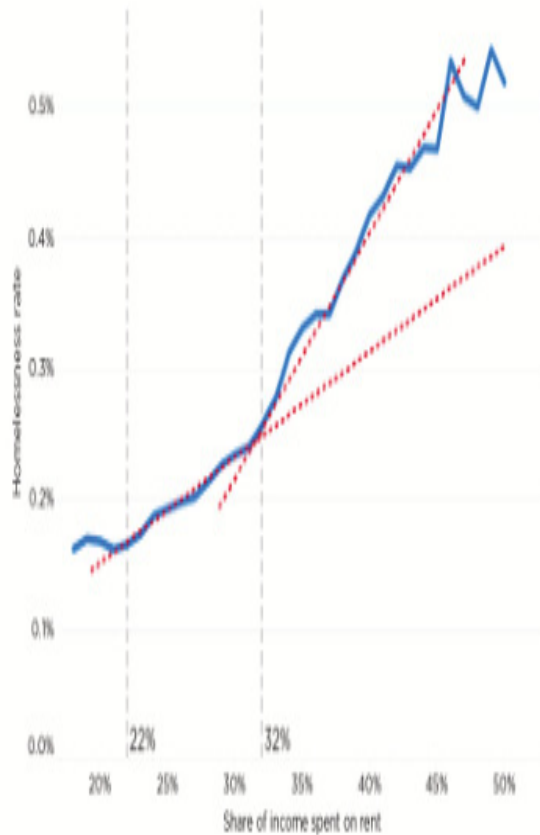
Figure 8.5. (CBPP, 2024) (This material was created by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (www.cbpp.org)).

the rate of homelessness and thus of potential populations that may become subject to slavery. Research conducted by Zillow showed that when typical households spend more than 22% of their income on rent or housing, those communities tend to see more homelessness, and when they are forced to spend more than 32% of their income on rent, those communities tend to experience dramatic surges in homelessness (Zillow Research, 2018). Los Angeles housing costs are well over this level: median-income residents spend approximately 49% of their income on rent (Moses, 2018). The relationship was further evinced by the fact that in 2017 the city and county of L.A. had the second largest number of homeless people in the country. However, this pattern is not unique to the City of Angels; other major metropolitan areas have median rents well above the national norm. While only 15% of Americans live in such areas, these areas account for 47% of the homeless population (Moses, 2018). Zillow's research revealed that the cost of rent exceeded the 32% threshold in 100 of 386 markets examined, with renters at the very bottom risking eviction and homelessness if their rent increases even slightly. For example, a 2% decrease in housing affordability in L.A. would increase the homelessness levels in the county by 6%, or approximately 4,227 persons (Zillow, 2018). The study also concluded that homelessness nationwide had been undercounted by approximately 20%: a matter of some 115,000 people.

In contrast to Los Angeles, homelessness rates in Houston are much lower than the Zillow team expected to find based on the market's housing costs. This is because the Houston community put in place specific assets that allow it to defy expectations when it comes to the 32% rule. After the Department of Housing and Urban Development targeted the city for intervention, Houston overhauled the services it provided to homeless individuals (Moses, 2018). Specifically, the city employed the use of intelligence, making effective use of data to improve interagency coordination. Through this strategic realignment, the city also redirected resources from programs that weren't producing permanent housing results to ones that were. The methods and practices of analysts in the intelligence community, if properly applied, can have dramatic effects on the fundamental root causes of human trafficking.

Homelessness climbs faster when rent affordability reaches 22% and 32% thresholds

An uptick in rent affordability beyond 22 percent translates into more people experiencing homelessness. Beyond 32 percent means a faster-rising rate of homelessness — which could mean a homelessness crisis, unless there are mitigating factors within a community.



Zillow Economic Research | Source: An analysis by Zillow Research Fellow Chris Glynn of the University of New Hampshire, Thomas Byrne of Boston University and Dennis Cuthane of the University of Pennsylvania.

Figure 8.6. (Zillow Research, 2018) *The 22% and 32% rules of housing affordability and homelessness.*

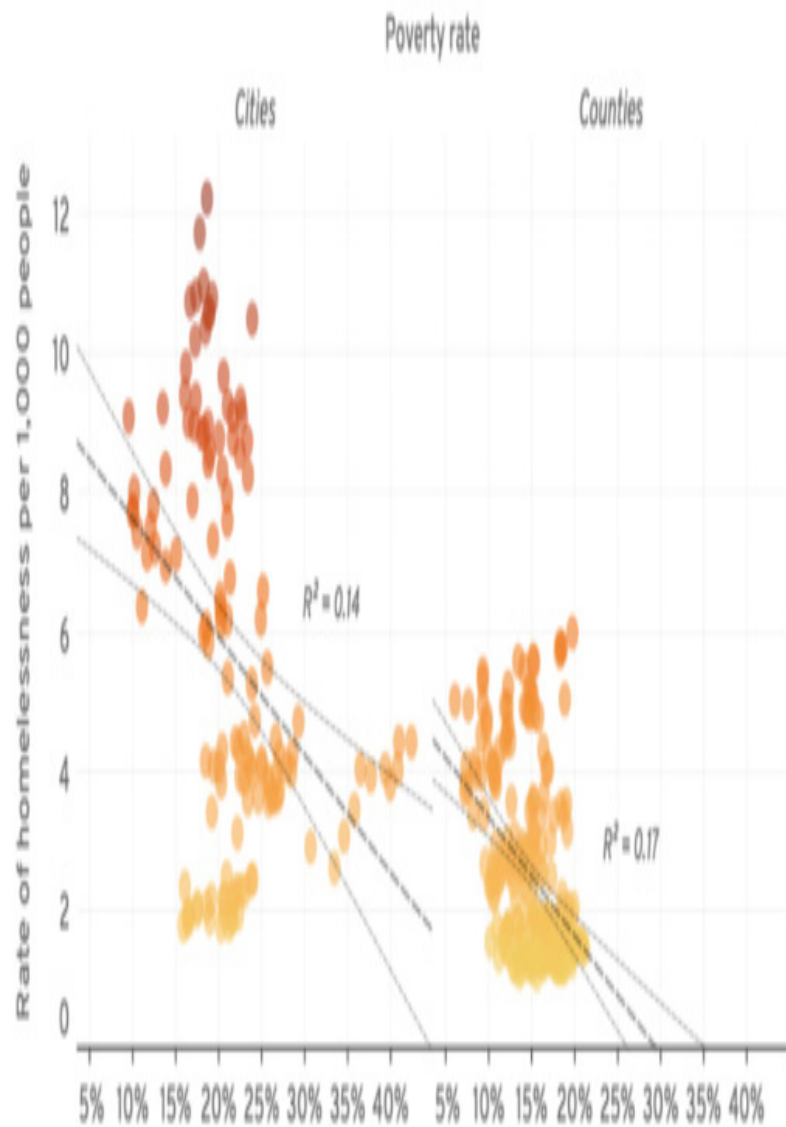
Homelessness is, of course, surrounded by stereotypes and stigma. One merely needs

to turn on local news or hop on social media to learn what the “real” causes of people sleeping on the street are claimed by many to be: poor moral character combined with overly liberal social policies, substance abuse, and mental illness.⁴ To some degree, and as we have seen, substance abuse and mental illness do increase an individual’s risk of experiencing poverty as well as homelessness. Thus, when media personas and ideologically-motivated, fact-deprived talking heads pontificate endlessly on alleged “news” stations because they’re more concerned with keeping their audience entertained than informed, it’s only natural that people begin to adopt such pigeonhole narratives as their own.

The data in no way supports such simplistic conclusions. In their book *Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns* (which, by the way, is recommended reading for this rather complicated chapter), authors Gregg Colburn and Clayton Aldern again highlight the complicated interactions of multiple factors and the mitigating role of geography. The authors are quick to point out that, at an individual level, poverty and mental illness are certainly risk factors for losing one’s housing (Colburn & Aldern, 2022). We’ve seen that already. However, at the population level, when all homeless people are considered collectively, something else is going on. It seems that these individual vulnerabilities pose different risk levels to people in different locations.

To clarify this point we need to understand that not all homelessness is the same. People experiencing *chronic homelessness*, which is defined as being homeless for at least one year *and* living with some form of physical or mental disability (including a substance use disorder, mental illness, or a chronic health condition) make up only 17% of all persons experiencing homelessness, per 2020 data (Colburn and Aldern, 2022). Compounding this issue is that mental illness, substance use, and homelessness once again present us with a chicken-or-the-egg scenario: did the mental illness and/or addiction lead to the homelessness, or did the stress and trauma of homelessness result in the persons developing mental illness and turning to substances to cope? It’s impossible to tell from a data perspective, confounding the results of any inquiry. Regardless, the chronically homeless also tend to have substantially higher health, mental health, and substance abuse problems than their non-chronic compatriots (see Rountree, Hess, & Lyke, 2019 for specific data). The chronically homeless are statistically twice as likely to be *unsheltered* as those who are not chronically homeless, thus being more visible to the general public – hence the origins of the harmful stereotypes (Office of Policy Development and Research, 2021). From this, we can see that it’s quite understandable that someone might witness this much more vulnerable population on the street and make the heuristic association between substance abuse, mental illness, and homelessness only to have it reinforced once they get home and turn on the boob tube.

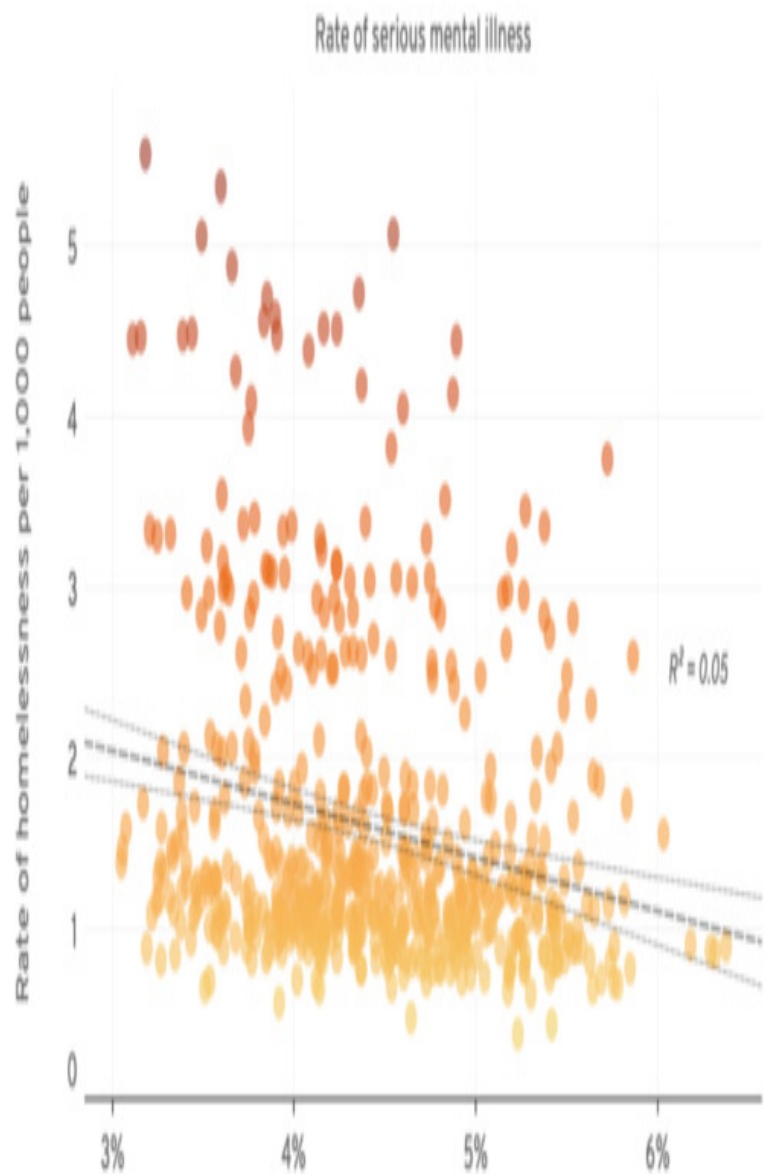
Now that we have that out of the way, we can get to the raw population data, and it’s quite illuminating:



Bands indicate 95% confidence intervals for the slope of the regression line.

Figure 8.7. (Colburn & Aldern, 2022) *The relationship between homelessness rates and poverty rates.*

Where poverty rates are higher, homelessness rates are correspondingly lower. Now, this seems surprising at first, given that experiencing poverty at an individual level increases the individual's risk of experiencing homelessness. Moreover, the relationship is relatively significant, statistically speaking. While counterintuitive, one must remember that we are examining populations and not individuals here: where large groups of people experience poverty there will correspondingly be cheap, affordable housing. After all, these people can't pay steep rents: they simply don't have the money to do so. Thus, high poverty rates at a collective level drive down housing market prices through simple economics, and this in turn reduces homelessness rates. What at first seems counterintuitive starts to make sense once one begins to work through the individual steps in the system.

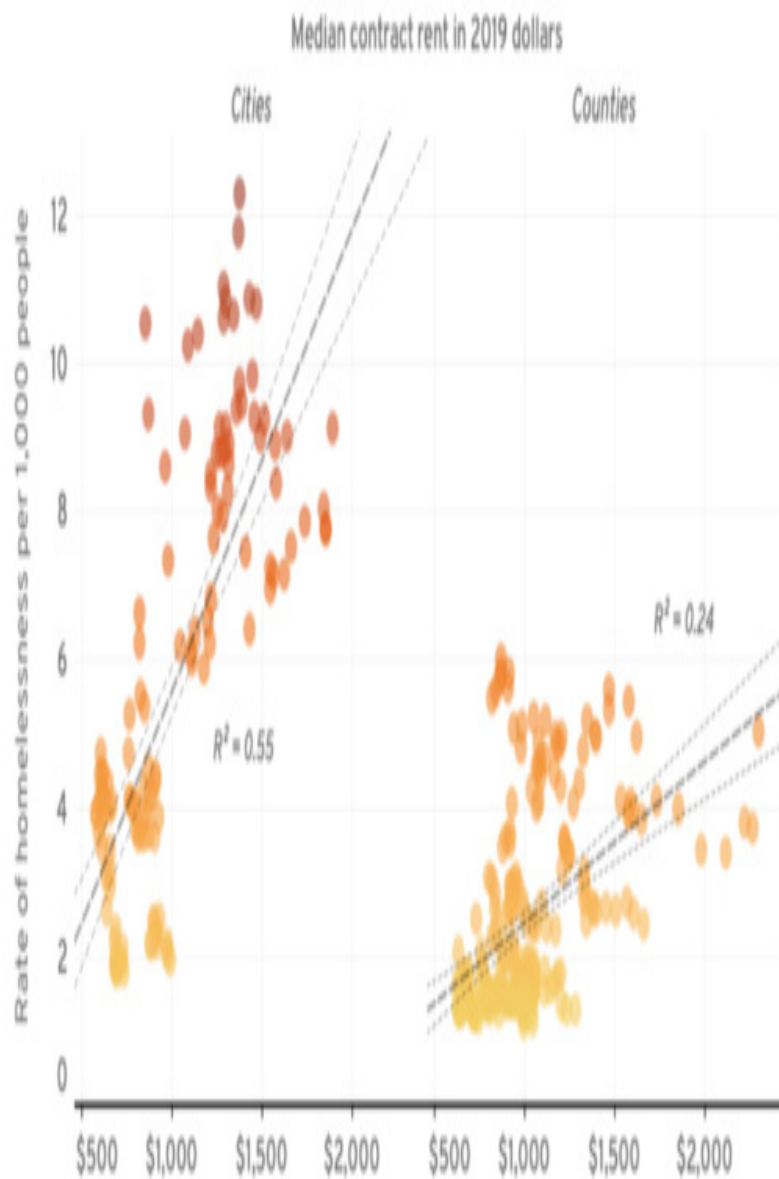


Bands indicate 95% confidence intervals for the slope of the regression line.

Figure 8.8. (Colburn & Aldern, 2022) *The relationship between homelessness rates and mental illness rates.*

Again, having a serious mental illness as an *individual* predisposes the individual to

experiencing homelessness, and as a consequence, to trafficking. However, *populations* that have higher rates of mental illness do not experience higher levels of homelessness (although they may be trafficked due to the underlying mental illness), possibly because they have invested more in social services and mental health care.⁵ There seems to be no statistically significant relationship between homelessness rates and serious mental illness rates (an R^2 score of 0 would be a flat line showing exactly no relationship whatsoever, so an R^2 score of 0.05 (Fig. 8.8) is pretty darn close to that). This data reveals a significant finding: high rates of homelessness are *not*, I repeat, *not* the result of more people with more individual vulnerabilities residing in those specific locations, especially not poverty and mental illness (Colburn & Aldern, 2022). So, what about housing affordability, as Hall, Moses, and the Zillow research squad had pointed out?



Bands indicate 95% confidence intervals for the slope of the regression line.

Figure 8.9. (Colburn & Alburn, 2022) *The relationship between homelessness rates and rent costs.*

Clearly, we can see a consensus forming among researchers and scholars. Suddenly,

we've gone from a $R^2=0.05$ when looking at the relationship between homelessness rates and serious mental illness to a massive $R^2=0.55$ (Fig. 8.9) when rent prices in cities are substituted for the variable of mental illness. That's a factor of 11. Statistically, that's huge. Much more importantly, the relationship has inverted: whereas there was a negative relationship between the homeless rate and mental illness rate (and even the poverty rate) meaning that as the latter increases homelessness decreases, there is a positive association between homelessness and rent prices. That is, as rent prices increase, so too does the homelessness rate. When combined with the lower rental-vacancy rates seen in areas with tighter housing markets, greater homelessness is seen (Colburn & Aldern, 2022).

Now, one might be thinking that we've already established that. However, Colburn & Aldern's findings add a new layer to our understanding of how these factors interact at the structural level, affecting our understanding of chains-of-risk:

Individual risk factors help account for who in a given city might lose their housing at any given point in time, but housing markets—rents and vacancy rates—set the context in which those risk factors are expressed. Without looking at housing markets, you can't explain why Seattle has a much higher rate of homelessness than Chicago, Minneapolis, or Dallas. The fundamental conclusion is that the consequences of individual vulnerabilities are far more severe in locations with less accommodating housing markets. (Colburn & Aldern, 2022)

In short, lack of access to affordable housing serves as yet an additional amplifier for individual risk factors for exposure to slavery, independent from poverty itself. Poverty rates are much higher in Detroit than they are in San Francisco, yet one finds more homeless people in San Francisco than in Detroit due to the restrictive housing market. San Francisco, of course, is a well-known hotbed of human trafficking.⁶

To add insult to injury, a 2024 study by Graetz, et al. revealed that the increased rent burden seen across the United States is associated with an increase in mortality rates. Similarly, those who experience an eviction or similar judgement face an even higher impact on their mortality, with the greatest impact experienced by those who were at lower risk of eviction prior to eviction. Per Graetz, et al., 2024, a 20-point increase in rent burden from 2000 and 2008-2012 was positively associated with a 16% (95% CI: 12-19%) increase in mortality through 2019. Compared to a 30% rent burden, a 70% burden was associated with a 12% (11-13%) increase in mortality. An eviction filing without judgement was associated with a 19% (15-23%) mortality increase while an eviction judgement was associated with an alarming 40% (36-43%) increase in mortality. To put it simply, greedy landlords aren't just causing people to become homeless: they're also quite literally killing people, all while contributing to the decline of the American health system (see discussion in Graetz, et al., 2024).

However, it's important to note that Colburn and Aldern's work doesn't account for all homelessness: There's still 17% of the homeless population that are considered chronically homeless – simply making housing more affordable likely won't help these people (Glock, 2022). In response to Colburn and Aldern's book, Judge Glock of the Cicero Institute raised this rather insightful point, arguing that additional resources will be needed to aid this particularly vulnerable population. Highlighting that those homeless who find shelter are dramatically different from those who remain unsheltered

(such as the chronically homeless), Glock argues that temperature variation accounts for more of the variation among homeless populations than do housing market variables.

It's important to remember that Glock is really only highlighting the plight of 17% of the homeless population: that is, those who are chronically homeless. There are several problems with the remainder of his argument ... actually, that's being a bit generous. There are *numerous* problems with his argument, the first of which is equating the unsheltered population with the chronically unhoused. While the chronically homeless are twice as likely to be unsheltered as those who are not chronically homeless, they are by no means the same population (Office of Policy Development and Research, 2021). To this point, he's not very careful with his statistics either: a third of a population (33%) suddenly becomes equivalent to 17% of a population at one point in his argument, and his definition of "sheltered" and "unsheltered" homeless persons varies from one sentence to the next – this is in addition to the fact that these statistics are over ten years old and outdated, and he could have used much newer data to make his argument (although this data doesn't as neatly support his argument as the 2011 data does – note that Colburn and Aldern used the more recent 2020 data; Office of Policy Development and Research, 2021).

Glock's concern with temperature variation raises additional issues: namely, that correlation doesn't equal causation. For example, there's a strong, well-documented correlation between those who confuse correlation with causation and their mortality, but that doesn't mean that the former causes the latter. Spurious correlations occur all the time, and as we have seen, there seems to be gathering academic consensus around the role of housing costs and its relationship to homelessness rates. Moreover, many of the points Glock raises seem not to directly contradict Colburn and Aldern's findings, despite that being his *explicitly* stated intention, but rather tap-dance around them. Glock never seems to have anything in his bag of tricks to impeach these findings directly, so he attempts to distract by pointing to other, unrelated phenomena in an attempt to catch the reader's attention. In fact, he at one point outright *admits* that reducing housing costs would aid the vast majority of the homeless population (83 percent of the homeless!), which is Colburn and Aldern's entire point. They're not talking about the other remaining 17%, but rather the *vast majority* of the homeless.

What is going on here? Is this just sloppy research on Glock's part? Is this just the tiresome academic nitpicking that we saw earlier occur over the effect legalizing abortion had on the crime rate? Or is something more at play – something, perhaps, that is affecting Glock's cognitive ability to reason and to make consistent arguments?

I think that I've detailed enough cases by now for the reader to know that it is indisputably the latter: there's overwhelming, nigh incontrovertible, evidence that Judge Glock isn't arguing in good faith. Billionaire Joe Lonsdale, co-founder of Palantir alongside Peter Thiel, founded and funds the Cicero Institute (Robbins, 2022; Carlson, 2020). Glock serves as a Senior Fellow at the Institute. Lonsdale is also heavily invested in the private prison industry via his venture capital firm, 8VC, which he also moved to Austin, TX at approximately the same time he founded the Cicero Institute. That will become important shortly; what's important right now for the reader to comprehend is that Lonsdale signs Glock's paycheck.

The Cicero Institute has put a great deal of money behind the singular notion of opposing the concept of affordable housing. This came to a head with the "Reducing

Street Homelessness Act” in Georgia that Cicero was instrumental in developing (Robbins, 2022; Harris, 2022; Hernandez, 2022). The Act diverted funds from permanent, affordable housing to temporary “encampments” to where homeless individuals would be “involuntarily removed” for stays of up to six months (Harris, 2022; Robbins, 2022; Hernandez, 2022). The Act provides for the involuntary removal and the hospitalization of those who appear to be “suffering from mental illness” and/or who are “in danger due to inability to meet their basic needs” (Harris, 2022). Who would be making the decision as to who qualifies for such involuntary removal?

It would be police officers – who have no mental health training and no experience in determining who is and who is not mentally ill (Robbins, 2022).⁷ Because of this lack of training, law enforcement interactions with disabled or mentally ill people often result in the deaths of those people (Laniyonu & Goff, 2021). This hinders the ability of advocates and service providers to care for these vulnerable individuals since the specter of arrest looms over every interaction an unhoused person has with the system; homeless people won’t even seek out services for fear of being arrested (Robbins, 2022). The Act thus served to criminalize homelessness, and mere poverty, even more than before. Sleeping on public property became a class C misdemeanor, a crime punishable by up to a month in jail and a fine of up to \$5,000 (Hernandez, 2022). How are the poor and the homeless supposed to afford such exorbitant fines and lengthy time away from work? It’s quite simple: they aren’t. They are instead serving as profit generators and forced laborers for those who house them. Given the disparities affecting the homeless and those in poverty (which we’ll examine shortly), this criminalization would further increase existing disparities in incarceration, poverty, and arrest rates – which is quite possibly the entire point.

This drive to traffic the poor, mentally ill, and substance dependent is masked from the public through truly Orwellian language and manipulative wordplay. The Cicero Institute displays no clearly visible red flags: on the contrary, it seems as American as apple pie. The organization’s website describes itself as a “nonpartisan organization focused on fixing problems in the public sector. We develop and fight for policies at the state level that restore liberty, accountability, and innovation in American governance.”

Who in their right mind can object to any of that? They want to fix broken systems. They’re nonpartisan – they say so right on their webpage! Indeed, further into their site, one finds phrases such as how they want to solve “our nation’s homelessness epidemic” while “advancing liberty and opportunity for all Americans.” In fact, they talk about “liberty” and “freedom” a lot – almost as much as they mention “entrepreneurship.” And that’s where the problem lies.

A surface-level examination of this terminology again reveals nothing amiss. The typical reader, voter, or investigator would find nothing to raise their suspicions – which is exactly the point. On the part of the Institute’s site pertaining to homelessness, the agenda driving the organization’s policies becomes more apparent. They aren’t so interested in eliminating homelessness to help those who happen to be homeless, but rather to promote certain specific interests they mention over and over again: businesses, taxpayers, and “public safety.” The data and studies the organization references pertaining to past unsuccessful efforts to combat homelessness all seem to stem from entities that have no direct experience in dealing with poverty or homelessness at all. Rather, they come from economists or those concerned about their own profit margin.

To this end, the many scientifically documented factors that contribute to vulnerability and homelessness become dismissed and replaced by simplistic stereotypes such as drug addiction, mental illness, lapses in personal judgement or great failures of personal responsibility.

The ideological motives behind the Cicero Institute's reasoning become increasingly clear, as does its focus on talking about "liberty" and "freedom" while actually promoting policies that take away liberties and freedoms. As students of Orwell might recall, *freedom is slavery*.

This betrays the financial interests of the Cicero Institute's founders and the game that is afoot: despite claims to the contrary, Cicero's policies and propaganda actually aim to dismantle Housing First programs that have proven effective in getting the homeless into affordable housing. Instead, Lonsdale's Institute promotes Treatment First models which are less successful. Declaring Housing First a "failure," the Institute has partnered with PragerU to advance their agenda by producing highly sensationalized, emotionally driven, and fact-deprived YouTube "documentaries" (Robbins, 2022). They've also been joined by fellow conservative policy organizations – the Manhattan Institute and the Heritage Foundation – to discredit affordable housing initiatives as a solution to the homelessness problem, despite overwhelming evidence of these policies' successes (Harris, 2022).

Let me be clear, because I know that no matter how transparent I am, someone, somewhere will accuse me of being a flaming radical transgendered Antifa Commie/Satanist who bathes in baby blood, all to distract from the core issue. The problem isn't that these organizations are conservative in nature. The problem isn't that these groups are even ideologically motivated at all.

Rather, the problem pertains to who would have profitable ownership of the "temporary encampments," residential "treatment" facilities, and private prisons that would house the homeless under these organizations' policies. (I give the reader three guesses and the first two don't count.) Similarly, one can easily guess these individuals' relationship to real estate developers and landlords who would lose countless dollars if rent prices were artificially lowered to make housing more affordable. Almost as if taking cues directly from the man who pays his mortgage, in response to Colburn and Aldern, Glock directly called for "deregulation" of the housing market all while admitting that *more* regulation would, in fact, reduce homelessness for a remarkable 83% of the homeless population (Glock, 2022).

It's quite a racket, and I mean that with the full criminal meaning behind the word: take the homeless, put them in institutions for which you get government funding to run, and put them to work as your own, private slave labor force. If the reader recalls, using prisoners as slave laborers isn't technically slavery, because it's *legal*. This is clearly the commodification of human life that Melton and Israel so accurately described and previously decried (Melton & Israel, 2021), only Melton and Israel happen to work for the very people who are now suddenly in favor of, *and directly profit from*, such commodification.⁸ It's strange how that works. Stranger still is how interests in slave labor and exploitation line up so neatly behind supposedly separate moral and political issues such as abortion and housing the poor. But after those two distinct issues, I'm sure that is the last time we'll hear from the Heritage Foundation. I mean, it sure would be *weird* if they popped up again, wouldn't it? Twice could be mere coincidence, after all,

and coincidences do happen.

But three times? Three times would be a definite pattern, wouldn't it? In fact, in my business we call that "enemy action." Let's put a pin in that for now.

As if this pattern were not bad enough, as of this writing in August 2023, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$1702 per RentCafe, with Rent.Com reporting that the median rent for the same unit in that month was \$2052 (RentCafe; Leckie, 2023). This equates to \$20,424 a year paid in rent alone (or \$24,624 per year if cost is closer to the median than the average). This naturally seems excessive at first glance, but one doesn't realize just *how* excessive it really is until one examines the federal poverty guidelines for the same year.

Table 8.1. (Health and Human Services). 2023 *poverty guidelines for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia.*

Persons in Family/Household	Poverty Threshold
1	\$14,580
2	\$19,720
3	\$24,860
4	\$30,000
5	\$35,140
6	\$40,280
7	\$45,420
8	\$50,560
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,140 for each additional person.	

From here, we can understand the housing crisis to be nothing short of a matter of a matter of

systematically imposed homelessness.

Of course, the price of housing is only one part of the financial equation of homelessness. Part of the affordability question depends on an individual's income, and to this end the minimum wage enters into the calculation. It's important to understand that the minimum wage was established to raise Americans out of poverty following the Great Depression. The term "living wage" comes from this early discussion, having been defined by Franklin Roosevelt himself as "more than a bare subsistence level – I mean the wages of decent living" (Roosevelt, 1933). In fact, it's important to note that the minimum wage was initially passed to eradicate one particularly heinous form of human trafficking: that of child labor. In fact, contrary to popular belief, most minimum wage earners are not teenagers: 72% were 20 years old or older as of 2007 (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2007). By 2020, this number had increased to 90% (Center for Hunger-Free Communities, 2021). Much to both of these points is the fact that in 1967 a single employee working 40-hours a week at minimum wage could raise a family of three above the poverty line (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2007). However, wages and the cost of living have notoriously parted ways since then.

The minimum wage was raised to \$5.15 in 1997 and to \$7.25 an hour in 2009 where it has remained since. Many current wage-earners are considered "housing cost-burdened" by the federal government, meaning these earners must spend more than 30% (and in some cases, 50%) of their earnings on rent. By 2007, a worker at a minimum wage job had to work 87 hours a week just to afford a "standard" two-bedroom apartment at the 30% federally established affordability marker (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2007). In 2015, nowhere in the United States could a person work a full-time job paying minimum wage and afford a one-bedroom apartment (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2015). By 2021, the average renter needed to earn \$20.40 per hour to afford a basic, one-bedroom home or apartment, with the figure increasing to \$24.90 for what is considered the "standard of living": a two-bedroom rental unit (Alas, 2021).

Individual Populations and Downstream Effects

This is where the disparities between large populations begin to appear. Per the Center for Hunger-Free Communities, 2021, 55.5% of workers were paid hourly wages in 2020. Of these workers, about 247,000 earned exactly the federal minimum wage, with 865,000 earning *below* the federal minimum wage – typically in tip-supplemented positions. Despite making up less than half of the hourly workforce, women constituted 67% of those making minimum wage or less. Further highlighting the disparity is that women who worked hourly were only paid 82% of what their male coworkers were paid (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

This has a phenomenal effect on poverty, childhood poverty, and other adverse experiences for the children these women are raising. Because many low-wage workers are employed in part-time roles, their employers are not required to offer them health insurance. In turn, these workers must pay extra from already low wages for insurance or medical care, go uninsured, or work sick. This particularly affects workers who were deemed "essential" during the COVID-19 pandemic, including home nurses, care staff, and others who if they work sick can spread illness and disease to many others. These include cooks, waiters, and other restaurant staff who are uninsured at rates well above

the national average. This contributes to these people and families becoming dependent on welfare. Despite stereotypes to the contrary, over 5.7 million Medicaid enrollees and 4.7 million SNAP recipients worked full-time hours for at least 50 out of 55 weeks in 2018 (Center for Hunger-Free Communities, 2021).

By 2012, there was already a strong push to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Despite some popular support, the issue was largely kicked down the road by both major parties until 2021, when it was proposed to raise the wage to \$15 per hour in 2025. The proposed legislation would have lifted wages for approximately a fifth of the American workforce (32 million workers) and would have lifted 1.3 million out of poverty, per the House Education and Labor Committee (Brey, 2021). Yet, this still ignores the effect of inflation. The buying power of \$15 in 2012 was \$16.97, per the Bureau of Labor. Using 2021 figures, the same \$15 would have the purchasing power of \$12 in 2025 (Brey, 2021). Even if the legislation had been adopted amidst the political chaos of the pandemic, it would have been the equivalent of responding to a demand for \$17 with \$12 more than a decade later – and this calculation doesn't even factor in the rampant, unpredicted inflation the country experienced between 2021-2023.

Youth experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to trafficking schemes, and this phenomenon overlaps with those who run away from home. With no income or resources, these youth are more likely to engage in survival sex schemes (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014). Once again, a feedback loop becomes apparent: being forced to leave home or running away is a key factor in a young person's vulnerability to sex trafficking. Those who engage in such trafficking often target runaways, particularly girls or those who identify as LGBT+, for recruitment into exploitation rings. In direct contradiction to the popular, progenitor ego-padding narratives of the child safety and anti-trafficking movements, children most often flee home due to physical or sexual abuse, parental neglect, family substance use, and/or domestic violence, with a remarkable 72% of homeless youth in one study reporting that they didn't actually *flee* but were instead *kicked out* by their families (Roe-Sepowitz & Bracy, 2021; Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014).⁹ Those who demonstrate an early and repeated tendency to run away have typically been victimized by sexual predators *prior* to fleeing, priming them for additional victimization when they do, in fact, manage to finally escape their familial living situation (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014). In this context, it is important to understand that 60% of child sex trafficking victims are trafficked by a family member (Nichols, Oberstaedt, Slutsker, & Gilbert, 2023).

A landmark 2016 study further highlights the role of these vulnerabilities in determining the probability of experiencing slavery. In a survey across ten cities in the United States, of youth aged 17-25 who reported experiencing sex trafficking, trading sex for money¹⁰, or engaging in survival sex¹¹, an alarming 68% reported having done so while homeless (Murphy, 2016). At least 20% of those who had engaged in this sex trade reported having been sexually involved with an older "sugar daddy/mama" for at least one of their sex trade experiences. This study was also fundamental in revealing that at least 8% of the youth surveyed had been labor trafficked at some point in their lives, with the overwhelming majority (81%) being forced or otherwise coerced to sell narcotics. Many respondents in this study reported being coerced and trafficked as children to sell or run drugs for their family's drug trafficking operation, again

highlighting the familial nature of trafficking, with many reporting that the drug trade was normalized early in their childhood when their families struggled financially to make ends meet. Others, however, reported being violently threatened by gang-traffickers and drug dealers into entering the trade, revealing the nature of both gang-related offenses as well as many drug-trafficking offenses.

There is ample evidence that such illicit employment is more widespread than the study revealed. Among youth who have been homeless, 91% reported having been approached with fraudulent job opportunities (Singleton, 2019). Labor traffickers may target this population for a number of reasons. First, these individuals may be in dire need of income to provide for basic necessities, and thus more likely to accept a hazy offer of employment. Such individuals also are likely inexperienced job seekers, lacking additional social support to determine whether an offer of employment is legitimate. Additionally, many are victims of discrimination due to their housing status. As such, they may accept work with promises – false or not – of lodging, safety, and fair pay, regardless of whether these conditions constitute labor trafficking. One need only consider the earlier example of the Chinese restaurant to understand why someone in such poverty might accept such an offer.

Data from Polaris and the National Human Trafficking Hotline reinforces the connection between homelessness and slavery, including the bidirectionality of the relationship. In response to a Polaris survey, 64% of trafficking survivors reported experiencing housing instability or homelessness at the time they were recruited into trafficking (Polaris, 2018). However, an equal number of survivors (64%) also reported losing their housing due to the abuse or trafficking they endured. This is a significant finding: not only does being homeless predispose one to experiencing trafficking, but being trafficked also predisposes one to becoming homeless. Once again, a feedback loop is visible: a victim who loses their housing due to being trafficked is at an increased risk of being re-trafficked in the future.

Polaris, 2018 also noted that the forced criminality of homeless youth being coerced to participate in the drug trade was substantially documented by the National Hotline. Building off of Murphy, 2016, data from the Hotline revealed that it was predominantly young, homeless women who were coerced into the drug trade while simultaneously being forced into the sex trade (Polaris, 2018). Between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2017, the National Hotline operated by Polaris identified 1,233 victims of sex trafficking where the type of location where they were recruited was known. Approximately 15% of these victims were recruited directly from shelter programs – defined as “homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, runaway and homeless youth shelters, group homes, and other shelter programs” (Polaris, 2018; p. 19). Quoting the report,

This is possible in part because many such shelters do not have confidential addresses in order to ensure that the homeless community can know where to receive services in any given city. However, this also means traffickers know exactly where these shelters and their vulnerable residents are and can monitor the premises and approach prospective victims as they come and go. Offers of more comfortable or private living conditions, free food or illicit substances, and intimate relationships are often used to coerce potential victims to initially

This raises a problem that may not be apparent to the reader. In recent years there has been a strong drive among social workers and advocates who specialize in domestic violence to “go clear” with their shelters as described here, that is, to go from having confidential shelter addresses to public ones (Belluck, 1997; Houghton, 2023). Their reasons include – and I sorely wish I was joking about this – literally allowing the public to meander through these shelters on tours to encourage donations (Thurrott, 2020; Houghton, 2023). The danger posed by this openness is even worse than that for homeless shelters given the more vulnerable nature of the population housed within as well as the fact these specialized shelters often double as shelters for trafficking victims as well, exposing these survivors to re-trafficking. Some things need to be, and remain, covert for a reason: in light of Polaris, 2018’s findings, we can see once again that those who are in positions to address these problems often make them worse, a phenomenon that is greatly exacerbated when questions of money and greed enter into the equation.

To illustrate this point, the author is aware of a clandestine services officer who served for years in some of the most hostile environments, witnessing unspeakable atrocities, all while honoring his oath to not talk about what he saw or did. In my conversations with him he demonstrated intimate knowledge of the prison at Guantanamo Bay and knew of other prisons at so-called “black sites” that he wouldn’t discuss. I provide this background because after working less than three months in a domestic violence shelter, he turned whistleblower for the state: his vivid description of how it would heavily “rain” in the shelter’s kitchen whenever the toilets were flushed above them remains seared into my mind to this day, as does his recounting of how he witnessed a woman literally cry and beg for forgiveness on her knees as a female shelter staff member screamed at and berated her for over half an hour. That incident only ended when the whistleblower finally managed to separate the two. The staff member suffered no consequences for the incident while the already heavily-abused and traumatized woman sought housing at yet another shelter.

Interestingly, this individual was himself labor trafficked at the facility, sometimes working 24-hour shifts without compensation. In our conversations it came out that it took him several years after leaving the situation to realize this fact, despite pointing out in his testimony to the state that the exact same thing had happened to his colleagues. It appears his dedication to “the mission” allowed him to see the mistreatment of his fellows, but completely blinded him to his own exploitation. Indeed, it seems he only caught on to the fact that something was really amiss once management asked him to falsify records, a felony offense in most states, which he refused to do. This incident led to him being referred to HR, which in turn ultimately led to his termination. This whole episode not only once again highlights the forced criminality of the trafficked but also the often-criminal nature of these shelters and institutions.

Additionally, from this case we can again see that 1) one doesn’t always realize that one is (or identifies as) a victim, 2) psychology is important in examining these phenomena, and 3) such abuse really can happen to anyone. More importantly, and returning to our original point, we can also see how these “shelters” can actually become hotbeds of trafficking and re-trafficking: If you were living in a facility where such abuse and criminality was running rampant, wouldn’t you be willing to listen to *anyone* who offered you a way out, even if it seemed kind of sketchy?

A 2021 study from Arizona State University further expanded upon the connection between youth, homelessness, and trafficking. The Youth Experiences Survey (YES), conducted for eight years through ASU's Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research, revealed that in 2021 approximately 40% of all youth aged 18-25 in the state had experienced sex or labor trafficking (Roe-Sepowitz & Bracy, 2021). The most common form of labor trafficking experienced by this population was domestic servitude. Roughly 62% of the population reported a mental health diagnosis (depression and anxiety were the most common), with 60% reporting substance use (most commonly marijuana). 72% of this population reported becoming homeless because they were kicked out of their home by their families, and 50% of the homeless youth population identified as LGBT +.¹³ All trafficked youth were statistically more likely to demonstrate PTSD, anxiety, depression, or substance addiction issues. However, youth who reported being sex trafficked in particular were statistically more likely to report depression, anxiety, histories of self-harm, histories of trauma, PTSD, and substance abuse than the others in this population.

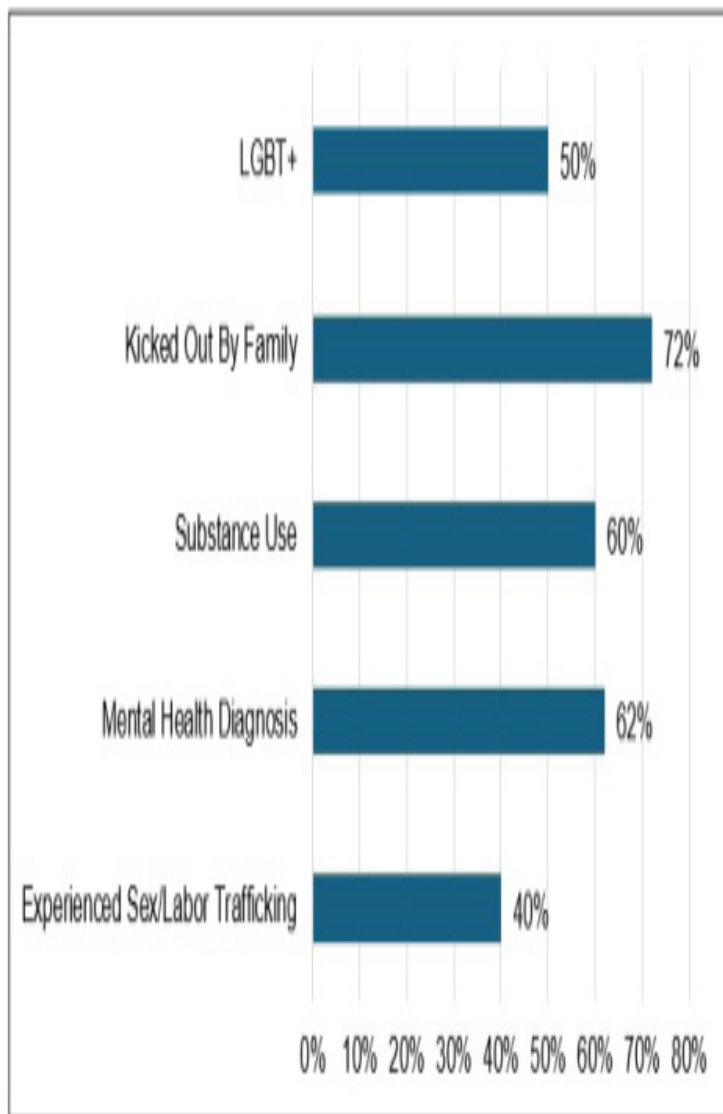


Figure 8.10. (Zarnowski, 2023) *The homeless youth population (18-25), using Roe-Sepowitz & Bracy, 2021 data. Note the many compounding vulnerabilities, as well as the high percentages that report being either LGBT+ or homeless as a result of their family's actions.*

The clustering found in this study linking trauma and associated disorders with

experiences of sex trafficking brings us back to the issue of housing affordability and rent prices. When tenants struggle to pay rent, landlords sometimes offer to accept sexual favors from them in lieu of financial currency. These offers can come in a variety of forms, from sexually explicit photos and texts following a tenant expressing concern about making the next month's rent to proposals to move in with the landlord. Such incidents skyrocketed in the initial weeks following the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020, with the Office of the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women receiving more reports of such requests from landlords in two weeks than it did in the prior two years (Aviles, 2020).

Let me make one thing crystal clear before we continue: *this is sex trafficking*, and Polaris agrees with me on this assertion (Polaris, 2020 May). Again, per 22 U.S.C. § 7102(12), sex trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion against another individual to make them engage in sexual activity in exchange for something of value. Value, as we saw in our examination of survival sex, is wide open to definition, being anything the person values, including money, food, shelter, or rent. In these instances of landlords soliciting sex as a form of payment of rent, the implied threat – that is, the *coercion* – is crystal clear: have sex with me, otherwise you and your family will be homeless. Coercion in return for something, *anything*, of value is trafficking, and a criminal offense under United States federal law (Polaris, 2020, May). Additionally, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. §3604) prohibits such conduct by landlords as “sexual harassment,” with many states having additional laws further prohibiting such harassment and discrimination (Aviles, 2020).¹⁴ Unfortunately, not many tenants (or many investigators) are aware of their rights under these laws, and the remedies under current systems for such offenses can take longer than it would for a landlord to evict a tenant who resists and reports such tactics.

This probably explains why such exploitation is so widespread, even to the point that elements of abuse are in the default language of many housing leases and contracts across the country. Examples of such exploitative language have been found in boilerplate form contracts from the National Apartment Association, SignNow, and RentalLeaseAgreement.com (Read, 2022). One Las Vegas area landlord, Allan Rothstein, was sued in 2022 for inserting a “sexual intercourse” clause into a woman’s lease. The woman was seeking housing from him using a Section 8 housing voucher; she was a formerly homeless single mom of five. After she refused his demand for a hand job, he added a clause into her lease stating that the mother was signing over, “direct consent for sexual intercourse and/or fellatio or cunnilingus” for five years. She was also restricted in the lease from having an intimate partner who was, “larger, meaner, and more physically aggressive” than Rothstein, and was similarly banned from using a variety of alleged “intoxicants” that included – yet was in absolutely no way limited to – such eccentricities as strawberries, dark chocolate, lobster, and sea cucumber (Read, 2022).

Discussing the case with *Curbed* Magazine, Chicago-based tenant-rights attorney Cheryl Ring explained,

I wish I could say that this was an outlier, but it’s not. There’s this idea that maybe what was unusual was that the landlord put it in the lease — well, that’s not unusual either. I had a landlord include in a lease a clause demanding daily lap dances. I have seen dozens — and that is not

an exaggeration — dozens of leases in the past year alone with a clause that the landlord has to approve a female tenant's overnight guests... The problem is most people don't know that the Fair Housing Act even exists. And the problem is the nature of the disparity of the bargaining power between landlords and tenants. It makes sense that this happens, at least in my experience, more often to women with children, single moms. The reason is they don't want their kids to be homeless. This is something that most overwhelmingly impacts women of color, largely because women of color are far more likely to rent than white women are. This overwhelmingly affects trans women more than it affects cis women.¹⁵

Both the data and the literature on the topic reveal that this is far from an isolated case. Such trafficking, as with most forms of trafficking, disproportionately affects low-income women of color (Elengold, 2016; Park 2018). Moreover, landlords and housing managers who sexually harass and traffic one tenant tend to target many more, so investigators need to look for additional victims in these cases. A large part of the issue is that while sexual harassment has gradually become less accepted in work environments, protections have lagged in housing. Agencies and public housing authorities that provide housing programs are not legally required to report or even document sexual harassment complaints against their staff (Park, 2018). Thus, while (most) employers have taken at least some steps to address sexual harassment, few housing providers and real estate management corporations have even acknowledged this problem exists.

A pilot study in 2018 that took place just as the Me-Too movement was starting to occur shed additional insight into this widespread form of sex trafficking. Among low-income women surveyed in Columbia, Missouri, 10% reported harassment that would have been deemed "actionable" under the law had it been reported, with 16% reporting "problematic" harassment and landlord behavior that wasn't deemed actionable (Oliveri, 2018). Most of those who experienced such harassment were particularly young women of color. Harassment ranged from one landlord's persistent and repeated demands for sex in exchange for rent reduction to one landlord who entered a tenant's unit at night without permission to masturbate in her bedroom as she lay sleeping. Importantly, all of the incidents reported occurred in private rental housing, and not in shelters or public housing, with all perpetrators being owner-operators and not employees of rental management companies (Oliveri, 2018). The attempts at recruitment into trafficking took two primary forms: while nearly all of the women were asked for sex in exchange for easing of rent, half of the women also experienced grievous criminal offenses such as indecent exposure, home invasion, and unwanted touching verging on sexual assault.

This pilot study shed further light on the coercive nature of this form of trafficking and how such vulnerability can be reduced through the strengthening of the social safety net. Contrary to the beliefs of many advocates prior to the research, low-income women who had obtained a housing subsidy (such as Section 8) were much *less* vulnerable to the predatory advances of their landlords than those who had not. The reason for this is a matter of simple economics: the women who had rental assistance could reject their landlord's demands and still pay their rent, thereby denying the landlord any justification to evict them. Contrarily, the women who did not have housing assistance but were struggling economically were typically forced to move after refusing their landlord's illicit requests.

Clearly, the additional resources to pay rent served to shield the women from the power imbalance, allowing them to turn down the recruitment pitch without it affecting their housing situation. But for the women who were not receiving such aid, saying “no” to the coercion meant moving themselves and their entire family. Thus, the Supreme Court’s employment-centered sexual harassment framework established in *McDonnell-Douglas v. Green*, 411 U.S. 792 (1973) is clearly inadequate, given that it requires plaintiffs to meet certain criteria before they can even make a claim of harassment (Oliveri, 2018; p. 22; 411 U.S. 792, 802 (1973)). It seems that this particular legal framework needs to be completely redrawn given its complete lack of application in housing and other, non-employment cases.¹⁶

Yet, this isn’t the only form of sexual exploitation in housing. Keeley, 2006 makes the sobering point that because of underreporting, the number of tenants who seek assistance with such trafficking recruitment offers does not reveal the true scope of the problem. Of all the women who reported such recruitment and coercion in Oliveri, 2018, only one contacted the police. The investigators took her report but didn’t investigate further, a common and well-documented experience among women who report sex crimes. A survey distributed to advocates and housing attorneys that focused on sexual assault and rape found that a shocking 58% had received at least one report within the prior year from a tenant who experienced sexual assault or rape at the hands of their landlord, property manager, or property owner (Keeley, 2006). These are not opportunistic, one-time predators, but rather psychopathic serial offenders: 33% of victims reported being sexually assaulted or raped by their landlord more than once, and 13% reported that they knew another current tenant had been assaulted or raped by the same landlord. Another 9% reported knowing that a former tenant reported a similar experience with the landlord. Despite this, only 42% of the women who were sexually assaulted by a landlord reported the incident to the police, while absolutely none of the male victims did.¹⁷

Such phenomena are not limited to the United States. Similar reports have been extensively documented in the United Kingdom, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cost of living has reached a crisis point there as well, forcing women to engage in survival sex to make ends meet when they are trapped in low-wage jobs. In particular, the problem is much worse for migrant women, asylum seekers, and women seeking to leave abusive relationships, revealing more filaments of the spider’s web (Bryant, 2023). Such economic burdens trap women in desperate and abusive dynamics, forcing them to remain in trafficking scenarios for longer than they would if they had more options available to them.

This leads to the extensive racial, gender, and age disparities that we see among impoverished and homeless populations, a phenomenon that is linked to similar disparities observed among people experiencing slavery. This is our fundamental thesis: that there is an inherent structure to slavery, and this structure determines who is and who is not likely to experience trafficking. Now, exceptions can and do occur. The case of the elite operator who was trafficked for his labor in a domestic violence shelter demonstrates that perfectly. However, that was an *exception*, not the *norm*. To address this problem, we must shift our focus to the patterns, not the oddball cases that demand our attention because they gobble up all media coverage and satisfy our deepest biases and self-serving needs. By understanding this structure and who is most *at risk*, we can

provide resources based upon risk analysis to those who are the most vulnerable.

Again, it's a simply matter of hardening the most vulnerable targets. Find those who are most likely to be attacked by our enemy and reinforce them. We give them the resources they need to not succumb to coercive schemes. As we saw in the case of the low-income women and the predatory landlords, *this works*. The women who had housing subsidies were able to refuse the would-be traffickers' advances. There was no weakness that the would-be traffickers could take advantage of. Those who did not have such subsidies were unable to do so, since their vulnerability for exploitation still existed.

Returning to our examination, there are critical qualitative factors involved that raw numbers and statistics leave out. Don't get me wrong, the data itself is revealing but the qualitative evidence makes the results of the basic math all the more damning, much to Dr. Ives' point in Chapter 3.

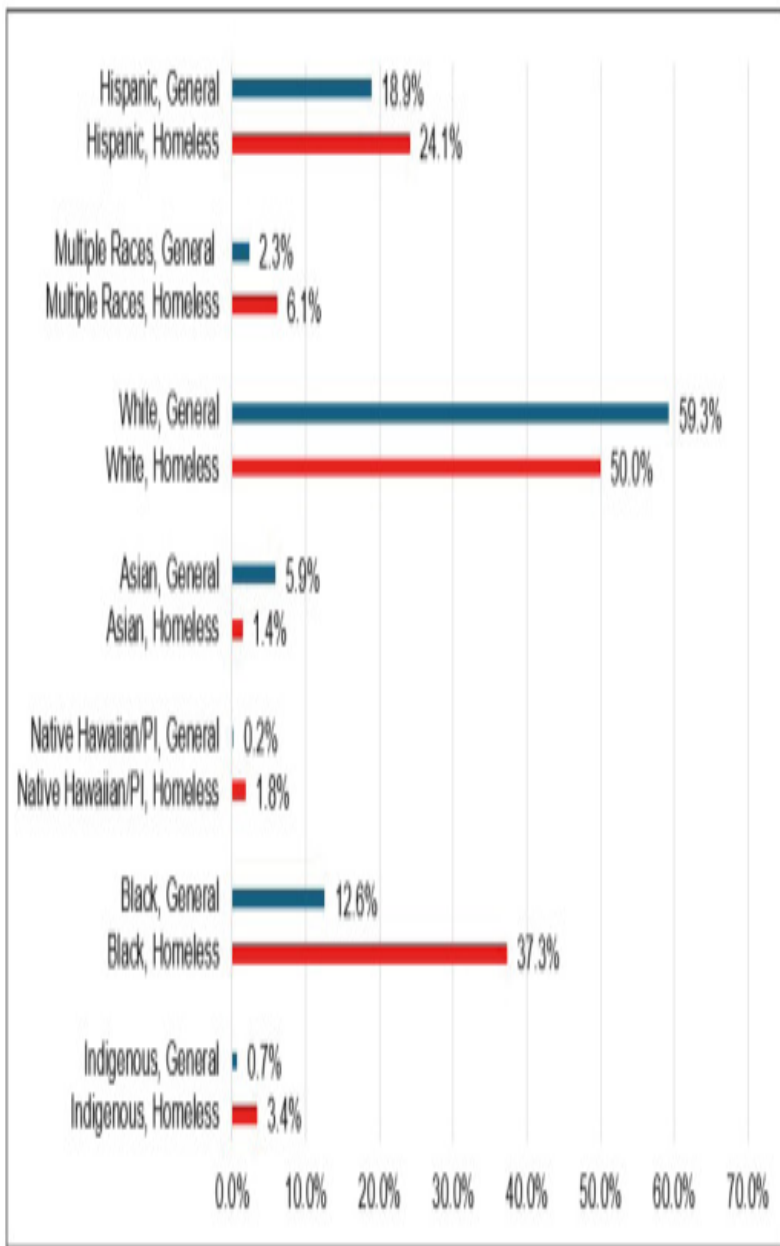


Figure 8.11. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Racial disparities among homeless populations, using 2020 Census and 2022 AHAR to Congress.*

As seen in Fig. 8.11, both White and Asian populations are underrepresented among

homeless populations, whereas all other races and ethnicities are overrepresented. In particular, Blacks are represented by a factor of 3 times their presence in the general population, the multiracial by a factor of ≈ 2.6 , Indigenous persons by a factor of ≈ 4.85 , and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander by an alarming 9 times their presence in the general population. Recall Roe-Sepowitz & Jabola-Carolus, 2021: is there really no DMST occurring among this population as is commonly believed, or are we just doing an absolutely horrible job at detecting such exploitation? Again, consider the role homelessness directly contributes to vulnerability and how invisible homeless populations often are.

While more Black persons experience homelessness than Indigenous persons, the Indigenous experience higher rates of *unsheltered* homelessness. In particular, 56% of all homeless Indigenous are unsheltered, compared to much lower rates for homeless Blacks (25%) and all homeless persons (37%) (Moses, 2020). However, this is not to say that Blacks experiencing homelessness have it better. Rather, they experience a lack of housing *differently*, in that 40% of Black individuals experience homelessness as a member of a family with children, in contrast to Indigenous persons (20%) and White people (22%). Hispanics tend to experience lower rates than the other groups, but their rate of unsheltered homelessness grew by 50% between 2016-2020, twice the rate of the overall homeless rate (Moses, 2020). Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders tend to experience the worst of all of these ethnic groups: they experience homelessness as families at rates higher than Blacks (45% to 40%) and experience unsheltered homelessness at a rate greater than Indigenous persons (57% to 56%).

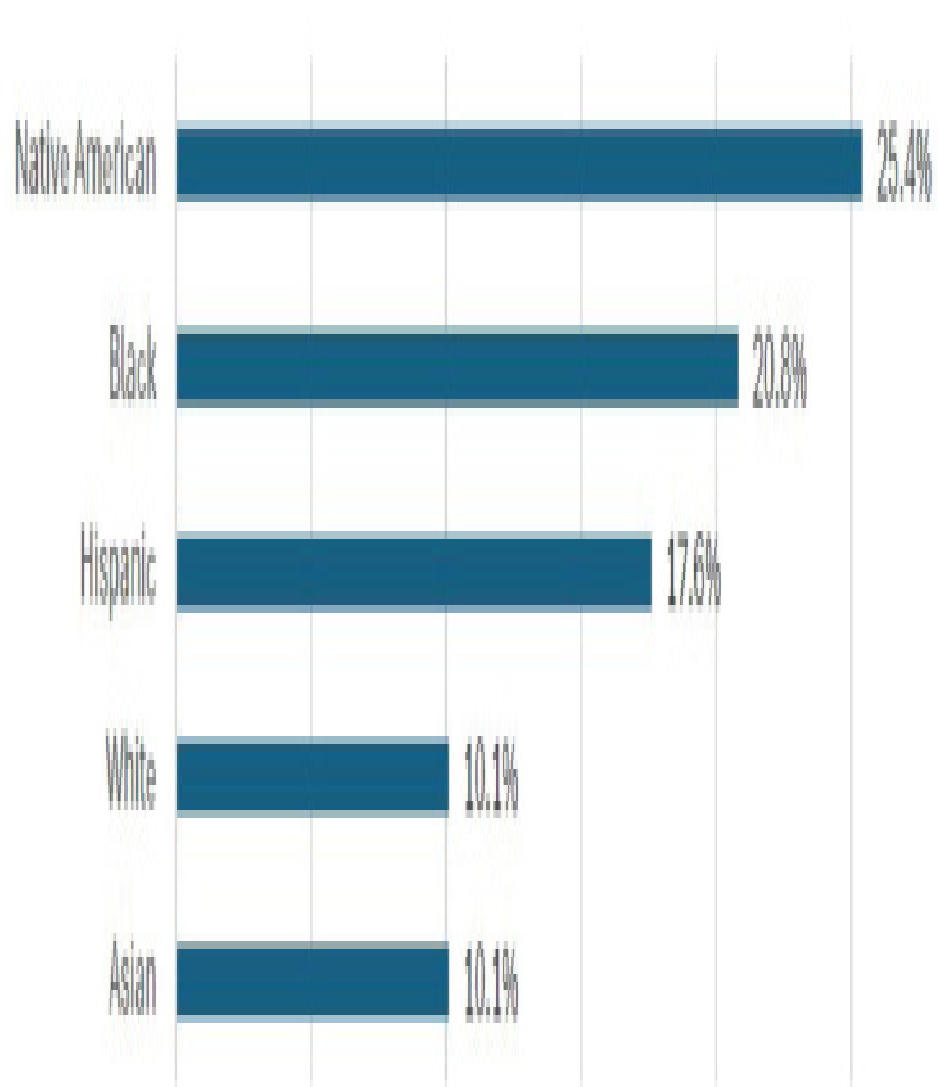


Figure 8.12. (PovertyUSA, 2023) *Poverty rates by racial group.*

All of this intersects with other risk factors in ugly ways that we have examined,

creating vortices of risk that suck entire populations into despair and create predisposition to exploitation across entire generations. Sex and gender are especially prominent factors in determining whether one experiences poverty: as of 2018, 56% of those living in poverty were women (Center for American Progress, 2020). This gender discrepancy interacts with racial discrepancies to produce even *further* divergences based upon race and gender. Hispanic women represent 18.1% of all women in the U.S. population but constitute 27.1% of women experiencing poverty. Black women make up only 12.8% of the female U.S. population, but account for 22.3% of women in poverty. Approximately 25%, or one in four, of all Indigenous women live in poverty.

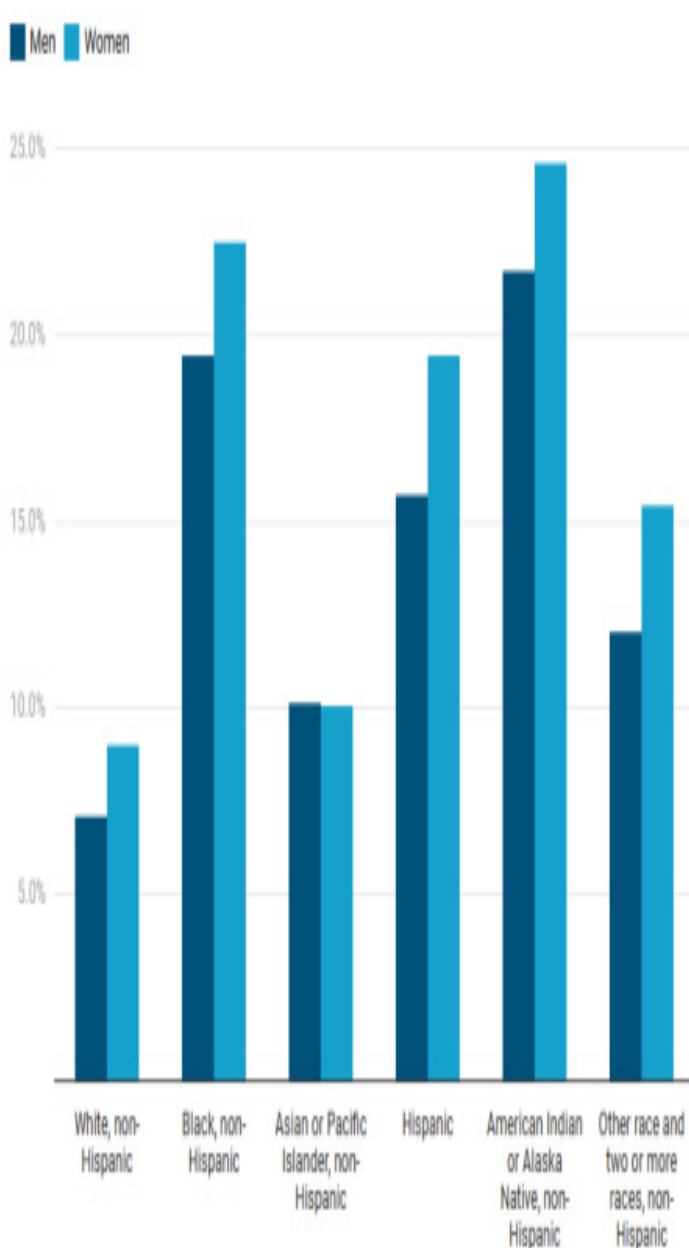


Figure 8.13. (Center for American Progress, 2020) *Sex differences in poverty rates across racial groups.*

Yet, these discrepancies can be broken down further, allowing us better insight into

the nature of being at risk of experiencing slavery. Women who are single mothers experience astronomically higher rates of poverty than unmarried women without children or married women with or without children (Center for American Progress, 2020). Nearly a quarter of unmarried mothers live below the poverty line.

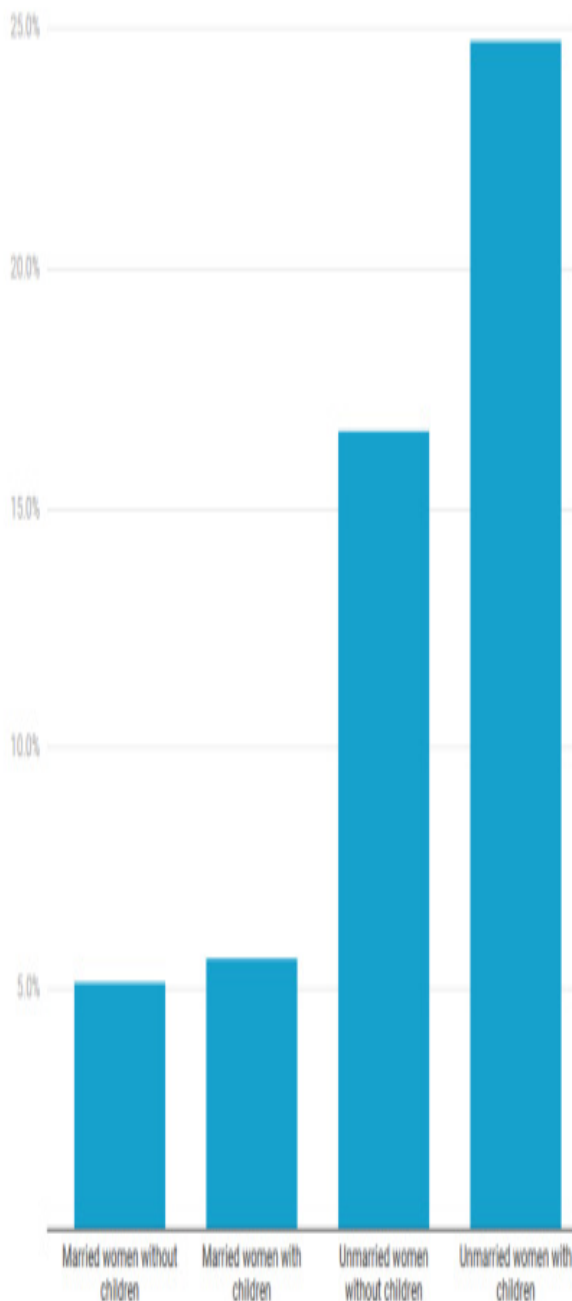


Figure 8.14. (Center for American Progress, 2020) *Marital status and childrearing status of women in poverty.*

The economic well-being of mothers is significant to this discussion, given the issue

of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Mothers who live in poverty, by definition, raise children who live in poverty. In fact, 31.1% of all of those living in poverty are children under 18 (Center for American Progress, 2020). The obvious connection is that merely experiencing poverty in childhood is an Adverse Childhood Experience, an experience that predisposes one to experiencing trafficking. Per Polaris' National Survivor's Survey of 2023, 83% of trafficking victims experienced childhood poverty, with 72% reporting that at some time in their childhood they did not have enough food to eat, 66% reporting that they did not have clean clothes to wear, 64% reporting that they experienced homelessness or housing insecurity as a child (Polaris, 2023). Recall: nearly one in three children experience this risk factor in America today.

This gives us important insight to follow through on: the overall individual risk of experiencing slavery in one's lifetime begins in childhood. Additionally, Adverse Childhood Experiences play a significant role in determining this lifetime risk. However, we can take this one step further. We can use this information to not only to explain people's behavior *ex post facto* as is currently the case in forensic psychology, therapy, and healing once an individual has been trafficked, but also to forecast what risks and unique vulnerabilities both individuals and entire populations will be faced with regarding potential future trafficking. Once we have this risk score or forecast, we can respond accordingly by shoring up the defenses where they are most needed through the proper allocation of resources.

This becomes all the more important when one considers individual genetics, ethnicity, and generational trauma. Different ethnicities have different histories of cultural trauma, and this can contribute to increased predisposition to trafficking and enslavement experiences. This is reflected in the rates of childhood poverty, an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), which only *further* predisposes an individual to experiencing trafficking later in life. Here, the chains-of-risk model shows its true value in calculating risk levels for both individuals and populations. Hispanics experience higher child poverty rates than Whites. Yet Guatemalans and Hondurans, for example, face an ethnic history of multiple genocides and brutal oppressions that Spaniards, for instance, do not. Hence, they are more likely to be predisposed to experiencing trafficking due to generational trauma than other fellow Hispanics. Theoretically then, more Guatemalans than Spaniards are expected to be found among trafficked populations in the United States.

The data on childhood poverty rates supports this hypothesis.

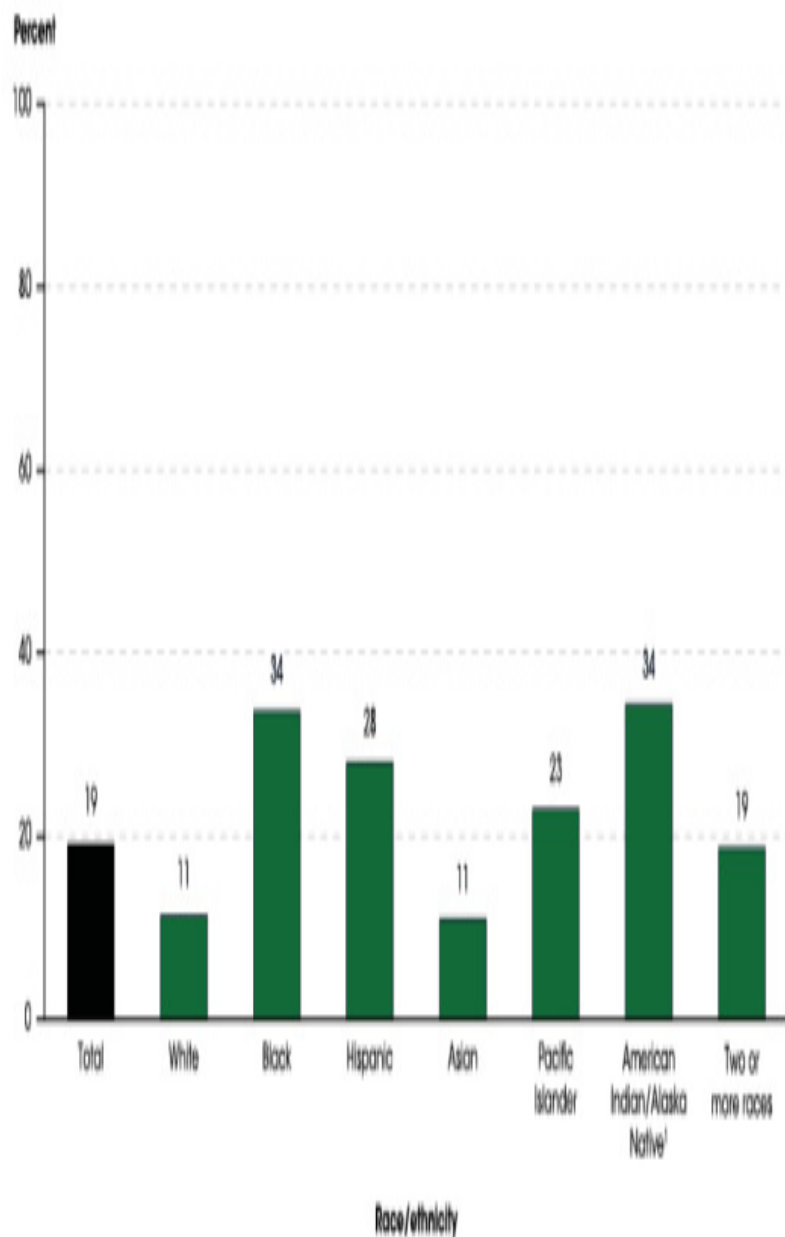


Figure 8.15. (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2019) *Child poverty rates by race/ethnicity.*

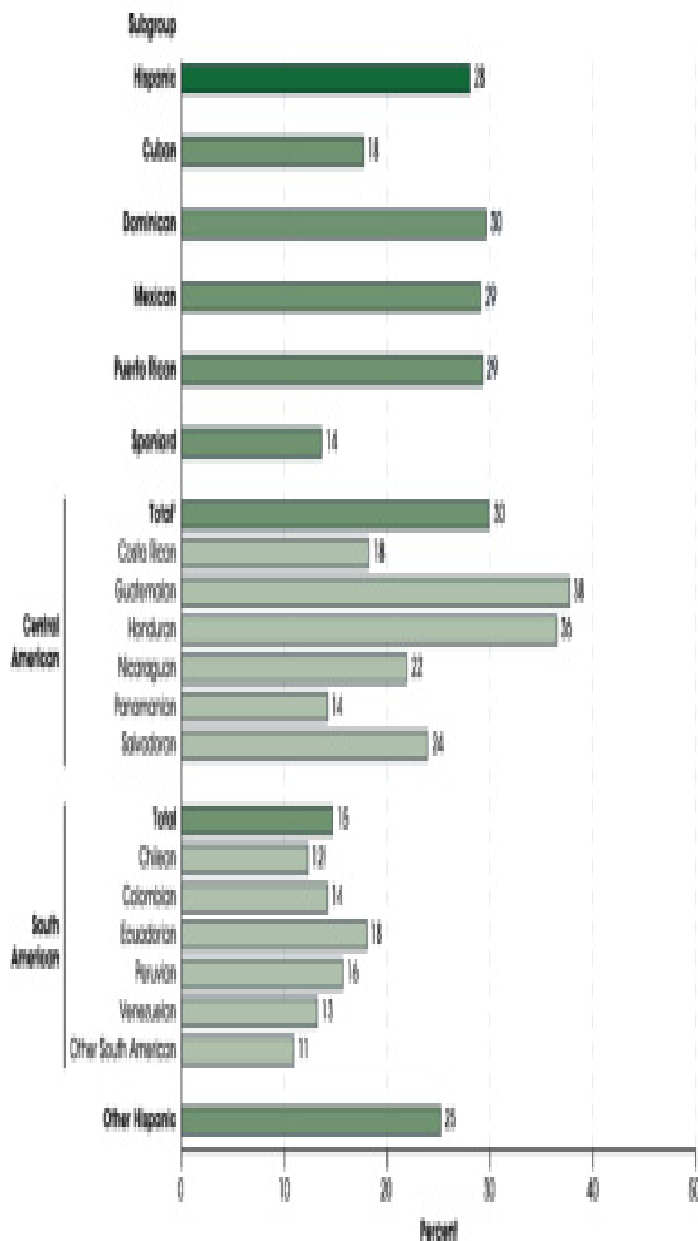


Figure 8.16. (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2019) *Child poverty rates among Hispanics by country of origin.*

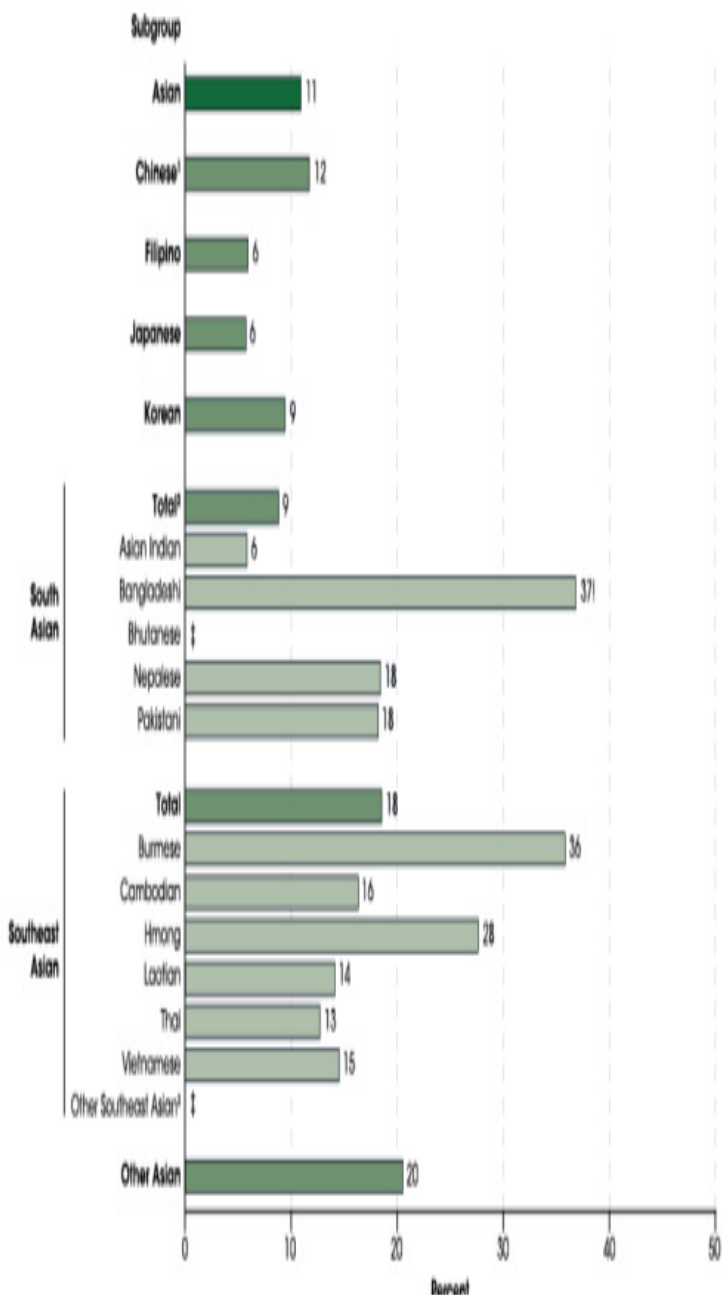


Figure 8.17. (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2019) *Child poverty rates among Asians by country of origin.*

While Asian populations tend to have childhood poverty rates closer to that of

Whites, note the exceptionally high rates of childhood poverty among Bangladeshi, Burmese, and Hmong populations. Consider the generational trauma of these populations compared to the others, including that of surviving repeated genocides and oppression.

Families and Generational Cycles

Yet, we can take this further: *much further*, in fact. Keeping in mind issues of generational trauma and history, additional data sheds light onto the structural differences that lead to children experiencing poverty through the key intersection of race and gender. As we've seen, this brings up the issue of children raised not only by single mothers, but single fathers as well, and how these children fare when compared to those who are raised in two-parent, "nuclear" families. In short, this area is an ideological mine field in which everyone and their brother has an opinion on the matter – especially if it's not a particularly well-informed opinion. Concepts of marriage and even of what constitutes a family pollute this issue to the point of toxicity.

Adding a level of lethal radioactivity to this already toxic ooze is the racialized and feminized nature of the issue. The 1965 Moynihan Report provided much of the groundwork for the present-day cover fire that is used to obscure the structural root of the problem, concealing the generational scars of poverty, slavery, their origins, and their interconnected nature. The report is significant mainly due to the obvious implicit bias that was evident within it: namely, a presumption that men – and explicitly *not* women – should be heads of households, an emphasis on predominantly White notions of traditional "masculinity"¹⁸, and a lack of consideration of historical and generational contributing factors (including traumas) tracing back to slavery. Please forgive a poor pun, but this report was a complete "whitewashing" of the problems facing the Black community. In fact, the phrase "blaming the victim" was literally coined in response to this report (Ryan, 1971). Thus, anytime anyone raised the issue of the nature or structure of Black families, the response was to accuse the person of racism and bigotry, even if they just cited numbers without interpreting them.

Yet, all of this racially charged back-and-forth does not change the facts. Such politicking, in fact, only makes our job of assessing risk more difficult because it obscures facts in order to serve cognitive and cultural biases, thereby supercharging the cognitive dissonance experienced when these biases are challenged. Regardless of the implicit biases of then Assistant Secretary of Labor Moynihan, 67% of Black children are born into single-parent households, and 73% are born out of wedlock, based upon 2010 and 2011 data (Jacobson, 2013). Again, those are literally just numbers. We are not assuming that being raised in a two-parent household is better than being raised in a single parent household or vice versa. Likewise, we are not assuming that being born out of wedlock is any better or worse than being born to a married couple. We simply haven't established that yet; we can't *assume* that yet. That would *bias* our results, hence Moynihan's grievous error.

There are vast differences by race as to how many children live in single-parent households, and these numbers correlate substantially with racial poverty rates. Overall, about 34% of children, or slightly more than one in three children, live in a single-parent family, either with a single mother or father (Kids Count Data Center, n.d.-b.). White children are statistically less likely than average to live in single-parent nuclear families

(24% vs 34%). Children of Asian and Pacific Islander ethnicity are, at 16%, the least likely to live in single-parent households.

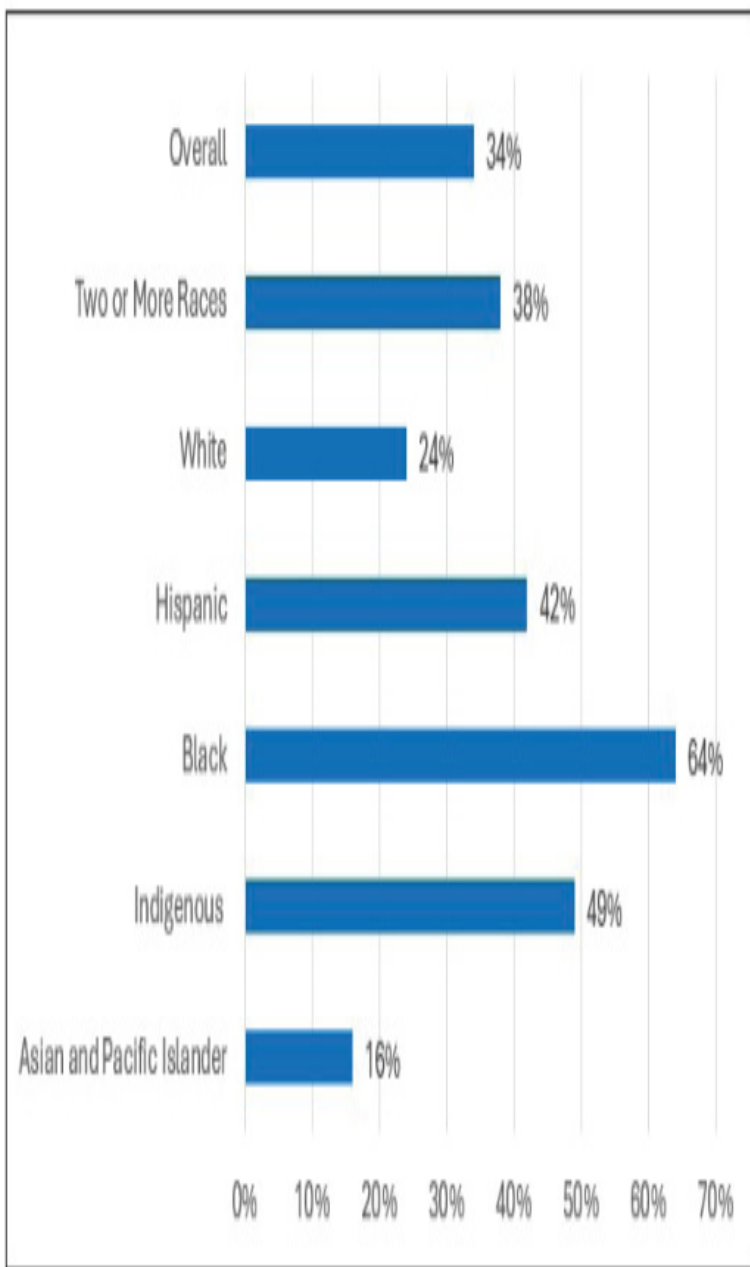


Figure 8.18. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Children living in single-parent families by race, using 2021 Kids Count data.*

So, does this mean that Moynihan was right? Is there something culturally

deficient” among Black families and their practice of “matriarchy?” Is the White way the *right* way to protect the best interest of the child, and all other races and cultures just need to “catch up?” Is the nuclear family the ideal situation for raising children, as so many have interpreted this information to mean?

Not by a long shot. As with so much else in this conversation, such arguments are gross oversimplifications of the phenomena at play. More importantly, the continued adherence to these incredibly antiquated notions are part of the problem in understanding the very issue that we keep claiming we want to address.

The first indication that this data is missing something is that Asian and Pacific Islanders demonstrate the lowest likelihood of growing up in a single-parent household. First of all, these two racial groups that, prior to this analysis, have been examined separately are now joined. Thus, we are limited in extrapolating meaning from these findings as the results are an unknown blur of the two populations. Nonetheless, this does seem to indicate that Pacific Islanders maintain a nuclear family structure more often than other racial groups. This seems to make sense given a previous finding that Pacific Islanders experience homelessness as a family at rates higher than that of any other ethnic group (Moses, 2020).

Here is where the notion of “White makes right” begins to fall apart. The concept of the nuclear family as a social and cultural norm is in fact a recent development, having been established in the 1950s by – you guessed it – none other than the dominant social group of the time, White Americans (Brooks, 2020). Such centering of whiteness forces literally anything and everything else to be regressed against this arbitrary and artificial mean. All other ethnic groups have since been compared *against* this group as a norm; any discrepancy was seen as a *failure* by the minority group to acclimate to the norms of the superior, dominant social in-group, which also just happened to be the dominant racial group because humans prioritize such silly things even if the data doesn’t necessarily bear it out.

Because of humanity’s tendency to also be highly egotistical, these norms also define the entire universe around them and how that universe relates to said humans. Hence the racist trope of the “model minority”—Asians and Pacific Islanders are ascribed this title as long as they are being *compared* to the dominant White majority. Their exceptionally low rates of single-parent households don’t reflect upon *them*, but rather upon the dominant White American culture. Rather than saying, “Look at their strong families and how we could be like them; what can we learn from them?” the predominant narrative is, “Look at how much like *us* they are. See what everyone can learn from *our* values?” Naturally, the fact that Asians seem to stay in “ideal” nuclear families more than Whites do is simply and conveniently ignored as an oddity to be noted and used to promote White norms and culture, not something that is intrinsic to Asian identity and culture to explore and adopt if this practice is in fact so sacred.

Then that little tidbit about family homelessness enters into the equation. Suddenly, Pacific Islanders, a group so closely related to Asians that they are lumped together in our sample, are no longer such an idyllic example of “traditional family values”—values so “traditional” that they were first promoted as the ideal only a little over seventy years ago. It is important to remember that this ethnicity’s experiences of homelessness are much starker than their compatriots, experiencing homelessness not merely as a family, but also in an unsheltered manner at rates even higher than that of Native Americans

(Moses, 2020). Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, of course, also tend to experience poverty at nine times the rate of their total representation in the overall U.S. population (see Fig. 8.11). This quite naturally means that this racial group also witnesses higher child poverty rates, which the data bears out (see Fig. 8.19). This highlights the inherent danger of grouping too many ethnicities into one racial group: vast disparities can exist across these populations, hampering assessments of risk (Cid-Martinez & Marvin, 2023).

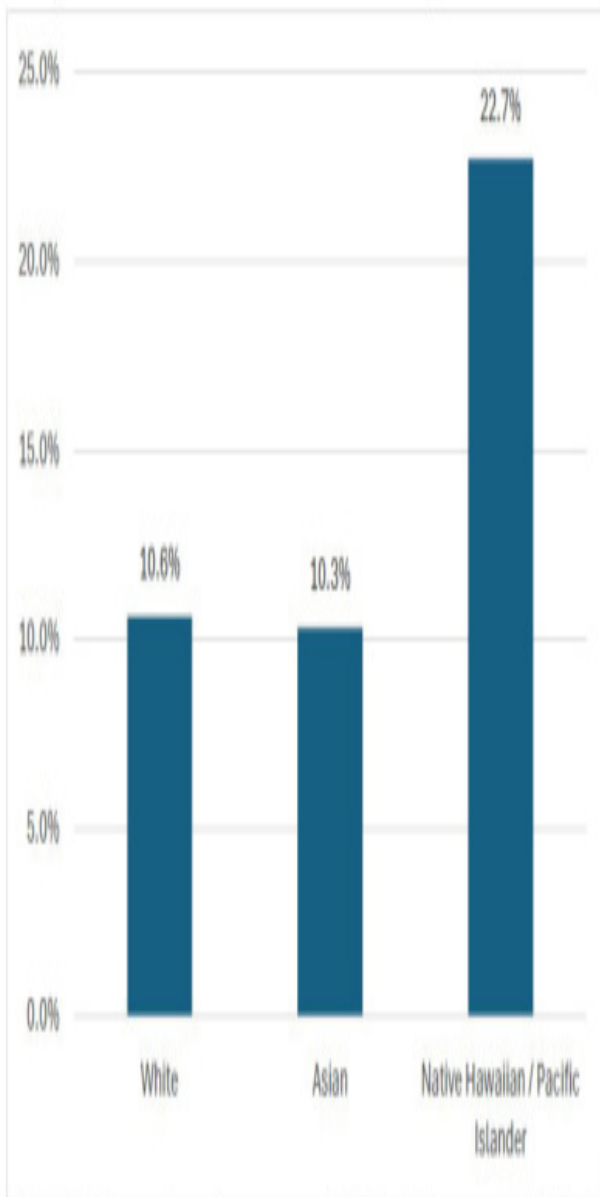


Figure 8.19. *Child poverty rates among White, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander children, using 2021 Census data. (From Cid-Martinez & Marvin, 2023.)*

So, it seems that the notion of what constitutes a safe and stable home for children is

even in question now. This is a grave problem: if our traditional understanding of what makes a home or a family safe and stable for a child is erroneous, how are we supposed to prevent children and young adults from falling prey to traffickers and other predators? It's almost as if we've been blindly trying to build houses out of bricks and mortar to keep the big bad wolf out, yet in our sightlessness, we've been grabbing and using handfuls of straw to erect our defenses instead of stone. As uncomfortable as this thought may be, it would certainly explain a number of things, especially as to how the damned beast keeps getting back in.

A safe and nurturing environment for children that doesn't expose the child to poverty as an ACE is less a matter of family structure than it is one of societal structure. Raising a child, after all, requires a great deal of money and a lot of resources, resources that many parents do not have, whether they live together or separately. Does this also bear out structurally across populations? If so, how does it influence one's risk to experiencing human trafficking? Then, how does this all relate back to the alleged importance of family structure – which is, again quite *allegedly*, super important for a child's welfare?

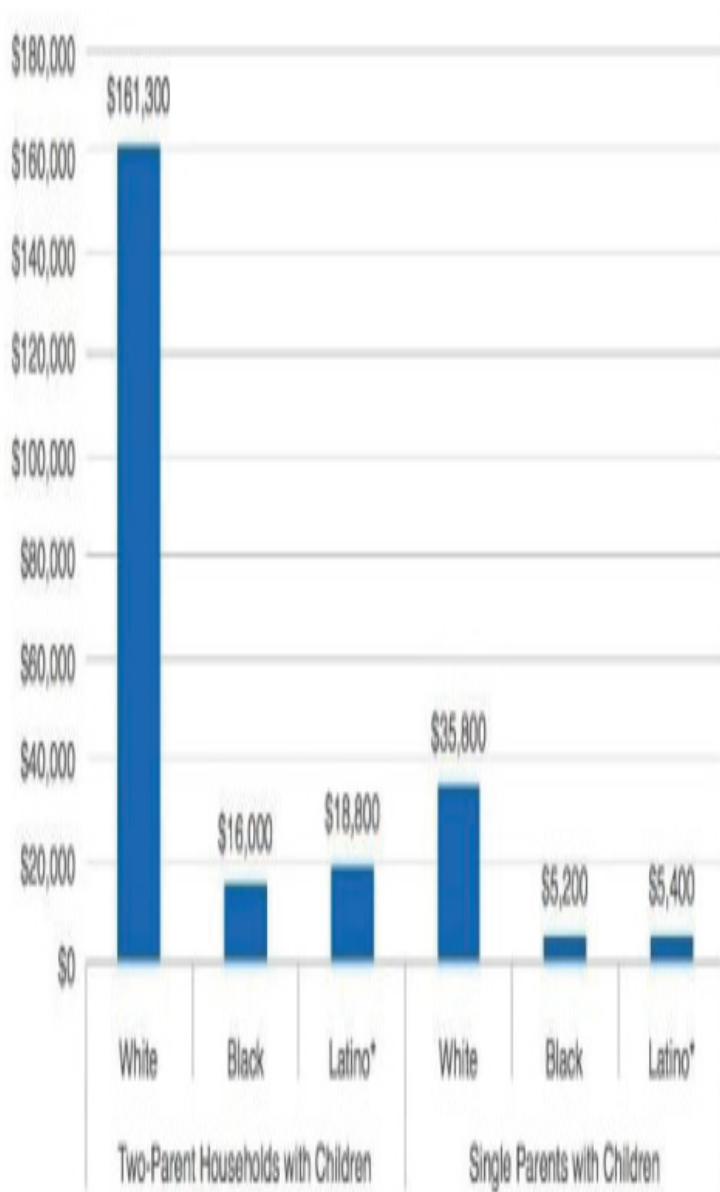


Figure 8.20. (Traub, et al., 2017) *Median wealth of households with children by race and partnership status.*

As one can tell from Fig. 8.20 above, two-parent families from Black or Latino

communities have *half* the financial resources of White single parents, (Florida, 2017). That is, they have half the wealth living together that a White single parent does, hence why they experience higher child poverty rates (AKA, higher ACE scores)¹⁹. The reason for this is well-documented and has been studied for literally decades: Whites accumulate wealth at a faster rate than people from other races, and the varied reasons for this started with the colonization of the New World and the exclusion of people of color from financial systems through slavery and segregation, and through discrimination that has carried into the present (Traub et al., 2017). From the data, one can see that the nuclear family only serves the wealth-generating interests of Whites, who quite incidentally created the notion of the nuclear family as the ideal family structure in the first place and then insisted that all other racial groups conform to the new norm.

Race and ethnicity clearly serve to compound the vulnerabilities introduced through poverty and childhood poverty. But what about differences between the sexes? As our examination of misogynoir demonstrated, race and sex often combine to produce even *greater* vulnerability than either single risk factor would on its own. The data supports this finding among single parents: single fathers tend to fare financially better than single mothers, earning an average \$56,458 to single mothers' \$35,287 before taxes (Lu, Walker, Richard, & Younis, 2019). Structurally, societies favor single fathers over single mothers, arguably due to sexist norms that still predominate civilizations and the laws that regulate them. A perfect example of this is how both motherhood and fatherhood are perceived in the workplace. When women have children, they are perceived by employers as having to split their attention between family and their career, a phenomenon known as the *motherhood penalty*. On the other hand, when men have children, they are seen as more responsible and more committed at work, a process known as the *fatherhood bonus*. Research shows that this disparity results in a wage penalty of 5 – 20% for mothers and a 6% increase for fathers – per child (Diamond, 2023). Hence why more single mothers and women – and thus, more *children* – experience poverty and homelessness than do single fathers and men. Indeed, 19% of all families in America are single mother households (compared to 8.77% being single fathers) yet these families make up 49% of those living in poverty – with over twice as many children living with single mothers (35%) being in poverty than those living with their single fathers (17.4%) (OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book, 2022; Federal Safety Net, 2022).

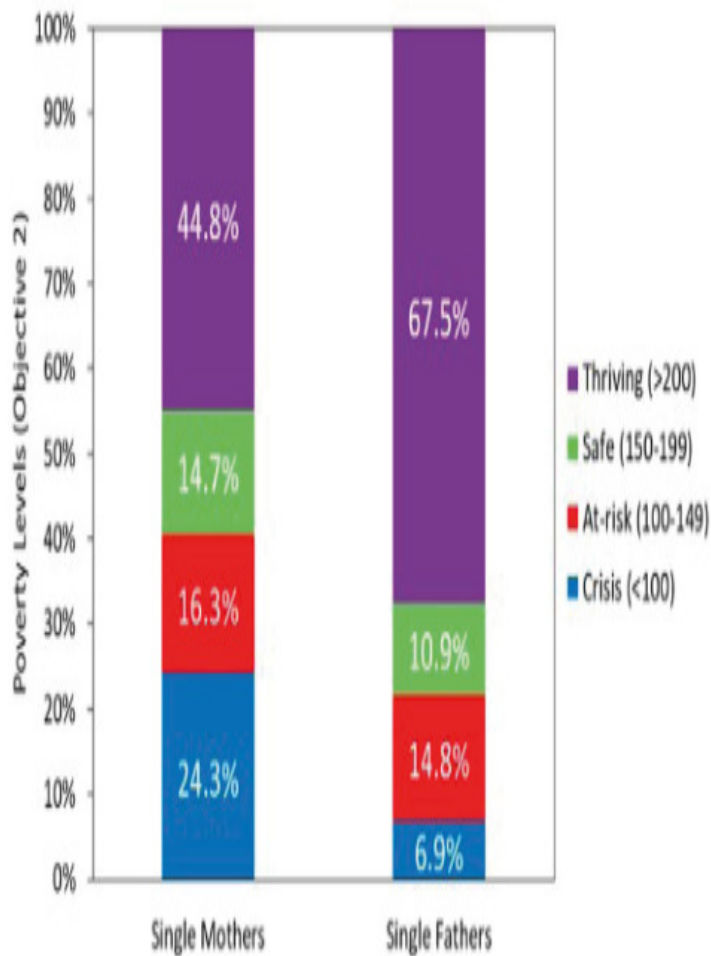


Figure 8.21. (Lu, Walker, Richard, & Younis, 2020) *Disparities in poverty levels between single mothers and single fathers.* Further demonstration of the intersection and compounding nature of racial and sexual discrimination per Traub, 2017 and Lu, Walker, Richard, & Younis, 2019. The full relegation of Moynihan and the arguments behind the nuclear family to the dustbin of history is left as an exercise to the reader.

The root factors and structural causes behind this phenomenon become even more

apparent by examining poverty rates across the lifespan for both sexes. In childhood, poverty rates between boys and girls are largely the same. Before the age of five, boys are slightly more likely to experience poverty than girls. However, for minors aged five to seventeen, girls overtake boys in poverty rates, particularly as puberty unfolds and they subsequently risk becoming pregnant. The poverty gap widens between ages eighteen and forty-four, prime childbearing years. In fact, for those aged twenty-five to thirty-five, women are sixty-nine percent more likely than their male peers to experience poverty (Center for American Progress, 2020). The gap closes in middle age only to reopen among the elderly, reflecting a stage that correlates to having most likely become grandparents. Contributing to this cycle is the fact that the poorer a person is, the more likely they are to see anti-abortion advertisements and messaging (Cheung, 2023; see Fig. 8.14). The reader is reminded of how having children, and being *forced* to have children, contributes to higher poverty rates, is a frequent tactic of abusive men exercising control over their female victims, keeps women in trafficking situations, and predisposes children to trafficking – thus perpetuating generational cycles of slavery (Foster, 2021; Collins & Skarparis, 2020; Forrestal, 2022; Macahon, 2022; Maine Coalition Against Domestic Violence).

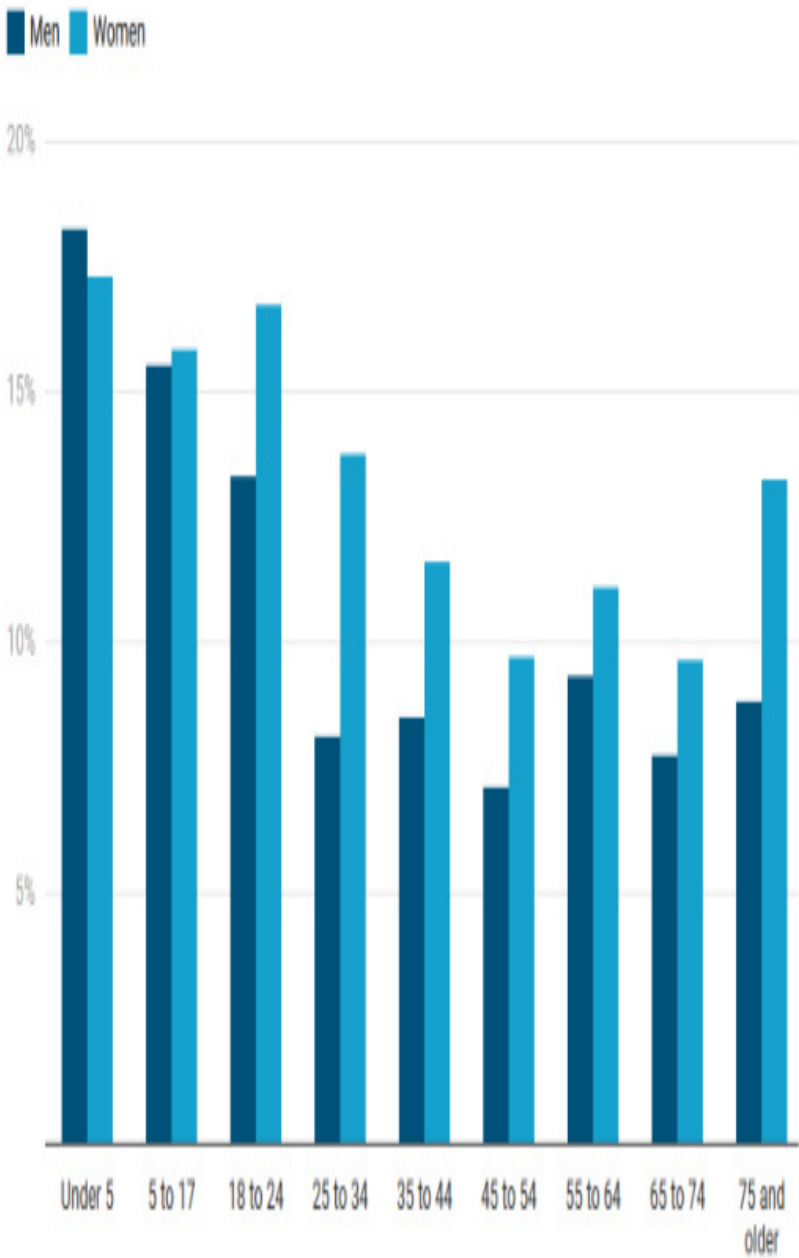


Figure 8.22. (Center for American Progress, 2020) *Poverty rates for men and women across the lifespan.*

The aforementioned risk factors of substance abuse, mental illness, and disability

also compound with poverty, as do race and sex (the latter, of course, explaining why women of color are predominantly the victims of modern forms of slavery; see Figs. 5.1 – 5.2). Approximately 8% of the overall workforce lives with a disability, and this population experiences a poverty rate of 24.9%. While it is important to note that this rate is lower than the adult non-working poverty rate of 29.9%, it is equally significant to recall the lesson we learned when examining Hispanic and Asian impoverished populations: one can miss vital disparities by grouping too much of the population together, such as by simply having a disability (Federal Safety Net, 2022). When we separate this population by sex, we find that women with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty (22.9%) than their disabled male peers (17.9%) and are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than nondisabled women (11.4%; Center for American Progress, 2020). This highlights the gendered nature of the structural phenomena in question. From here, it is important to recall that a truly disturbing 90% of all autistic women have experienced sexual violence (Cazalis, Reyes, Lduc, & Gourion, 2022). Increased poverty rates among this particular population due to their extensive chains-of-risk are likely the causal factor of this high rate of violence and also explains this population's vulnerability to trafficking experiences.

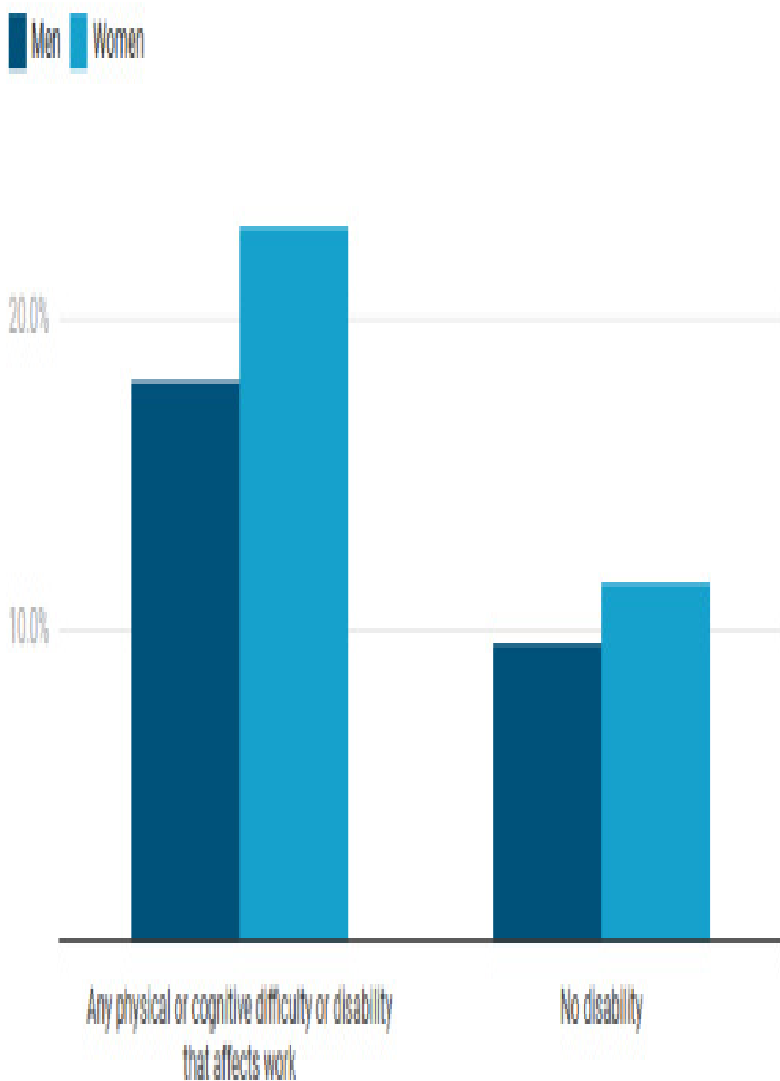


Figure 8.23. (Center for American Progress, 2020) *Poverty rates by sex and disability.*

Additionally, education plays a significant role in determining potential experiences

of poverty and in ending generational cycles of both poverty and slavery. Those aged twenty-five and older who do not possess a high-school diploma suffer from a 27.2% poverty rate, whereas those in possession of a four-year college degree see only a 4.1% poverty rate (Federal Safety Net, 2022). Of course, obtaining an education, and especially a college degree, is a matter of resources – resources for which Black and Hispanic individuals are at a distinct disadvantage from White individuals.²⁰

Through this examination, we can see the truth of the issue as it pertains to mitigating risk of poverty and, thus, risk of being trafficked. The resulting insight we have gained, however, goes far beyond the stated topic of poverty. Once again, one can see how complicated the problem of human trafficking is, as well as the harm caused by simplistic, one-size-fits-all narratives. This is, at its core, a matter of vulnerabilities as risk factors. The prejudiced nature²¹ of human society is chiefly responsible for these risk factors arising in the first place, hence the extensive supplemental reading for Chapter 2 on these topics that is given in Appendix 1.

The World is a Vampire

So far, we've focused on risk factors for those who are especially predisposed to being victimized by human trafficking. That is, the patterns we've established pertain to those who are already among the most vulnerable. Yet, as we have seen (and as is repeated ad nauseam by modern abolitionists) anyone can, given the right set of circumstances, become a victim of the newest form that this vicious serpent takes. So how far away is the typical American from being susceptible to the schemes of traffickers? That is, speaking purely in terms of risk factors, how vulnerable is the typical American citizen to being, well, *vulnerable*?

Let me put it this way: when has anything in these pages been a source of comfort?

In 2019, before anyone had even heard of a coronavirus called “COVID-19” or had imagined the worldwide economic devastation that it eventually wrought, a survey revealed that 59% of Americans were at risk of becoming homeless. More specifically, these 59% of Americans were merely one missed paycheck away from experiencing homelessness firsthand (Griffith, 2021). By 2017 supposedly middle-class families were struggling to pay even basic costs such as for groceries or housing, with 39.4% of all adults between the ages eighteen and sixty-four reporting experiencing at least one type of material hardship that year (Urban Institute, 2018; Picchi, 2018). Millions of Americans live just one missed paycheck away from experiencing poverty, with at least 40% living without enough funds to cope with a sudden disruption to their income stream – such as that which comes with being laid off and/or being trapped at home in the middle of a global pandemic (Picchi, 2019).

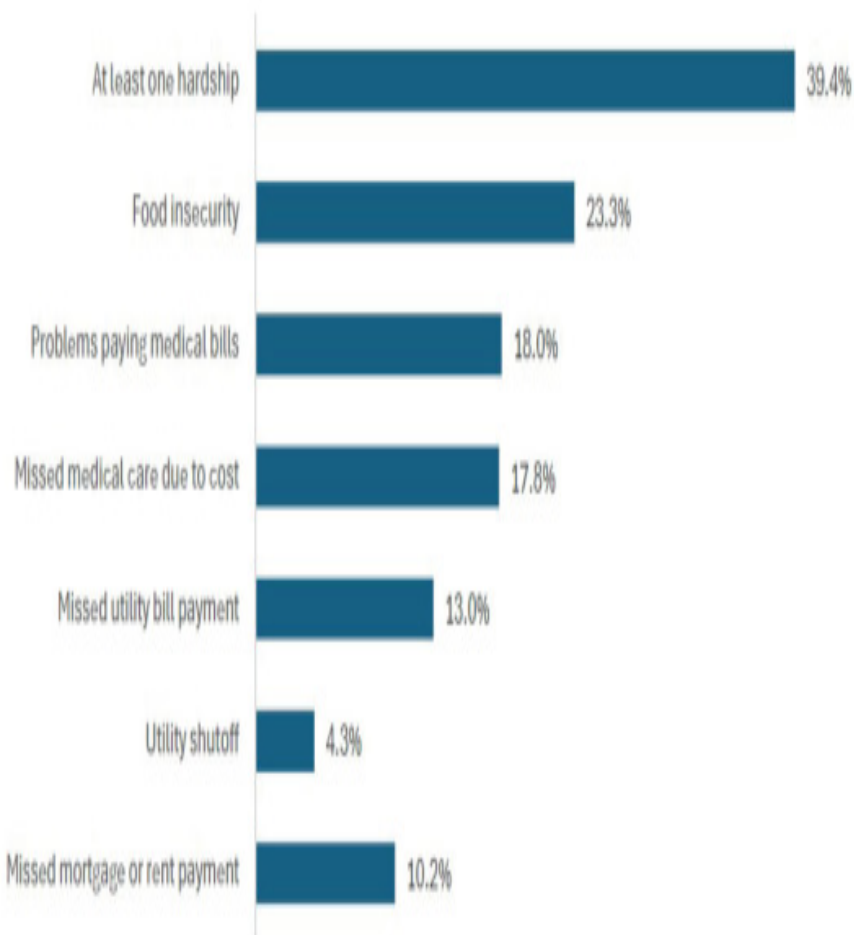


Figure 8.24. (Urban Institute, 2018; Picchi, 2018) *Nature of financial hardships reported by adults ages 18-64 in 2017.* The author is not saying that the COVID-19 pandemic could have been prevented, much less predicted. But there were signs that the entire American economy was a house of cards. What have we learned about houses of cards?

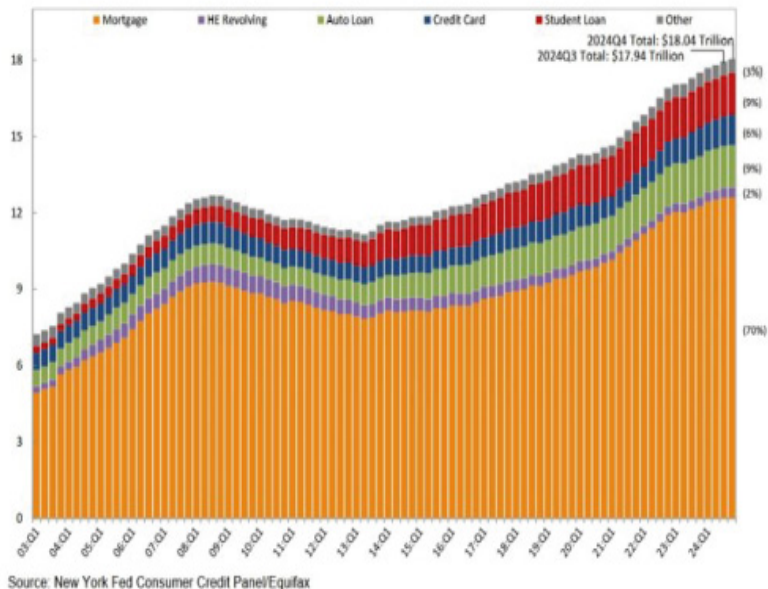
In addition, 51% of *working* adults further stated that more than one missed

paycheck would cause them to be unable to cover necessities without accessing savings, with another 15% needing to access savings after a second missed paycheck (Young, 2019). Of course, such hardships are stratified by racial, gender, and other risk factors: 65% of Hispanic households alone and 67% of low-income households (households earning less than \$30,000 annually) would be completely unable to pay for necessities if more than one paycheck was missed.

The astute reader may notice significant differences between the numbers being discussed here. After all, how can 59% of the population be one paycheck away from homelessness with only 51% merely needing to access savings to cover a missed paycheck? The key is that these studies pertain to different populations: the 59% number pertains to the entire American population, the 39.4% refers only to *adults* aged 18-64 within that larger population, and the 51% refers to a further subgroup: *working* adults. Moreover, these data miss a matter of finance that plays an important role in recruitment into slavery schemes, especially labor trafficking. That overlooked item is debt. Americans carry an enormous amount of personal debt, and to pay it off a person might be tempted to take an offer that is simply too good to be true (See Jenkins, 2022). It's called debt bondage for a reason, after all.

Total Debt Balance and its Composition

Trillions of Dollars



3

Credit Card Debt in the U.S., 2015-2024 (trillions of dollars)

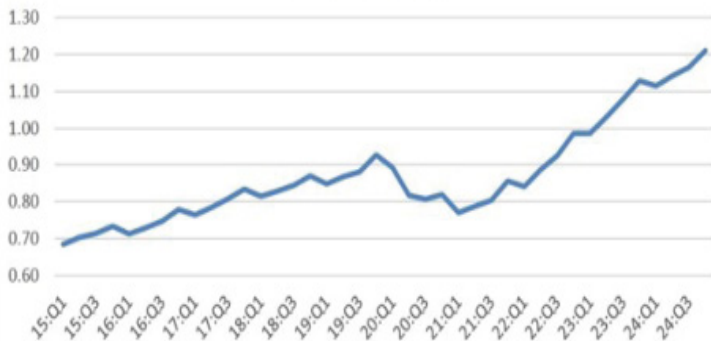


Figure 8.25 (New York Fed, 2025) *Consumer debt in the U.S.* As per Fig. 8.24, there have *definitely* been signs. The reader is advised to consult Jenkins, 2022 to see just how the problem of debt is interwoven into the fabric and foundation of society – and, thus, to slavery.

Yet, this doesn't begin to cover some of the darkest, most predatory forms of slavery

in the United States. As per Fig. 8.24, a lack of income often results in individuals putting off necessary medical procedures or postponing payment on medical bills, thereby increasing their debt. This stems from America's rather notorious healthcare system, which relies upon a separate system of private insurance to cover the exorbitant costs of care. Of course, such insurance is often too expensive for those who need it most, resulting in great disparities in healthcare (see Fig. 5.17 and Khullar & Chokshi, 2018). Those who can afford such healthcare experience positive outcomes so significant that Americans in the top 5% of the income bracket added 2.5 years to their average lifetime expectancy between 2001 and 2014 – while those in the bottom 5% gained absolutely nothing (Chetty, et al., 2016).²² But again, the raw quantitative data misses something that the qualitative data highlights: the nigh-vampiric, leeching relationship between the two populations.

I use these words both intentionally and literally. Per the United Network for Organ Sharing, a little more than 27,100 organ transplants occurred between the start of 2023 and August 25 of that year (UNOS, 2023). Yet as of August 25, more than 103,000 Americans were actively awaiting a lifesaving transplant. Simply put, the demand for human organs and other vital, lifesaving tissues dramatically outpaces supply, creating a demand that organ traffickers fill. There are some nuances to this conversation that are important to consider, however. In particular, those who are in poverty are *both* most likely to experience the health conditions leading to the need for an organ transplant (due to the harsh nature of poverty itself) as well as being the most likely to be the victim of an organ trafficking or organ harvesting scheme, turning to selling their own organs just to pay for food or other necessities (Robinson, 2016; Khullar & Chokshi, 2018).

When these individuals find themselves in need of a transplant, they are typically added to the transplant waiting list mentioned previously consisting of over 100,000 Americans. The typical wait time for a person put on the list is three to five years (National Kidney Foundation). However, those who can afford it can travel to another country where the organ trade is less regulated – and where, incidentally, there are more organs available to be transplanted. This is known as *transplant tourism*: a potential donor/recipient travels abroad to purchase an organ and undergo organ transplantation (Broumand & Saidi, 2017). Of course, there is no guarantee that the organ donor was completely willing to part with the organ.

Some of the top transplant tourism destinations are ripe with abuses. In China, dissidents of the Communist regime are brutally executed and subsequently harvested for their organs, which are then used in transplants for wealthy transplant tourists, including Americans (Gutmann, 2014).²³ Pakistan is another hot spot for transplant tourism, and given the nature of transplants and how they are conducted behind closed doors in hospitals, enforcement of laws prohibiting organ trafficking is impossible (Fatima, Qadir, Moin, Pasha, 2018). Poor Pakistanis are often lured into selling kidneys or eyes for much less than these organs are worth just to afford food, assuming they are paid at all. In fact, it is not uncommon for members of underprivileged and persecuted ethnic and religious minorities to be found dead on the roadsides of Karachi, sans their vital organs. The situation dramatically worsened after the fall of Kabul in 2021, with many Afghans – former American allies – disappearing after arriving as refugees in Pakistan only to have their corpses discovered in similar form. There is strong reason to suspect that the entire

supply of approved, “donated” organs across the Americas and Europe is in fact horribly contaminated with trafficked organs, with some scholars even estimating that the numbers reach well over eighty percent of the entire global supply (Glazer, 2022; Broumand & Saidi, 2017).

This is a global phenomenon and not specific to the United States. Moreover, the situation is perhaps more akin to a description of Frankenstein’s monster than one of the living dead who live off the lifeblood of the young and virtuous. So why do I liken the relationship between medical care and those in poverty to that of an abchanchu?

One may recall the earlier discussion on surrogate mothers and how surrogacy can and often does constitute a form of trafficking: a woman is literally paid to rent out her womb for a wealthier couple. The issue is remarkably similar to that of embryo and egg trafficking: as in vitro fertilization became more popular and more common, it seems that no one really bothered to ask where all the donated eggs for these procedures actually came from. In many cases, women experiencing financial hardship or poverty are exploited and coerced into selling their eggs. In some cases, these eggs are implanted into women held in the “baby factories” described in chapter six, and when born, the children are laundered to wealthy families seeking a child as part of the illicit adoptions trade (Harley, 2019). Naturally, the egg donors were paid much less than the receiving, wealthier parents were charged, despite the risk: having one’s eggs harvested can result in severe medical issues and can be potentially fatal even if done completely right.²⁴ And while the trade is typically understood as occurring in a transnational context, it also occurs in America among American citizens where it is marketed as a way for the desperate to escape poverty (see Fig. 8.26). Yet there is a product that is even more commonly trafficked than kidneys, eyes, eggs, and shockingly, even women’s uteruses: human blood.

Following the end of World War II and Edwin Cohn’s discovery of blood plasma fractionation, more patients could be treated than ever before. This led to an increase in the need for blood and, unlike other developed countries which emphasized voluntary donation or minimal compensation, America uniquely monetized the process to an extreme. Soon the unpaid donor model that had been the standard even through the war was replaced by for-profit blood banks (Schneider, 2020). Simply put, blood trafficking was in, and business was booming. By 1970, these for-profit enterprises were often located near where the most frequent “donors” were available: college campuses, impoverished communities, and even within prisons. However, in 1971 *The New York Times* and *The Chicago Tribune* ran stories as to how the blood supply from these paid donors was contaminated by lethal hepatitis (interestingly, this did not seem to be the case with voluntary donors – voluntary donation is much safer than compensated donation; Schneider, 2020).

The next year, in 1972, another *New York Times* article revealed a large blood harvesting operation being run out of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Severely impoverished Haitians sold their blood to Hemo-Caribbean to pay for food, clothing, and other necessities in the deeply deprived country, which then froze the approximately 5-6,000 liters it collected every month before it shipped it to the United States and Europe to be fractionated into plasma. The company had parallel operations in underdeveloped regions of Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Belize, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. Similar corporations were noted as having approached African countries

with business proposals during the 1950s and '60s, alarming the International Red Cross. Many American businessmen were noted as having become millionaires from the blood and plasma trade while avoiding oversight and lowering costs by turning to overseas sources of blood, which wasn't necessarily checked for hepatitis or other disease – resulting in the 1971 contaminations and eventual World Health Assembly regulation in 1975.²⁵

Theoretically, that should have been the end of the for-profit blood trade, much like slavery should have been eradicated in 1981. Yet as of 2023, 54 of the 171 reporting countries got 50% or more of their donated blood from paid donors (WHO, 2023). This history provides important context for current trends. While Hemo-Caribbean shut its doors in 1973, its ghastly legacy carries on to the present day with Mexico and other countries having banned paid blood donorship. However, just across the border in hyper-capitalist America, the practice remains legal and largely unregulated, with historical problems having been forgotten or ignored. Add in an immigration system that is not designed to actually help people immigrate as much as it is to exploit them for their labor before deporting them back home, and the situation is ripe for even more corruption (Zarnowski, 2022a).

Having been recruited from Facebook and other social media or having seen flyers promising immense pay, thousands of impoverished Mexicans cross the southern border of the United States every week on B1/B2 visitor visas to sell their blood at extremely profitable blood donation centers located along the border (Dodt, Strozyk, & Lind, 2019). Under the visa program, such transactions are legal since they don't constitute "employment" which requires an H1/H2 visa, but rather "compensation" for the "time and effort" required to donate.²⁶ We should also not ignore the physical toll that repeated donations place on these individuals. Unlike other countries, the United States does not as strictly regulate how often each person may "give" blood. One 21-year-old Mexican woman interviewed by Dodt, Strozyk, & Lind, 2019 reported that giving blood twice a week at an El Paso clinic causes her to experience migraines, faint frequently, and feel numbness in her limbs. The more she donates, the worse her symptoms become. Such lackadaisical regulations allowed the country to become the top supplier of blood plasma in what as of 2019 was a \$21 billion global market (Dodt, Strozyk, & Lind, 2019).

To provide this level of supply, the donation centers at the border even offer "recruit a friend" bonuses for those who bring along a friend or family member to donate, and they pay up to \$400 a month to those who donate twice a week (see Fig. 8.26). For many donors, this serves as their only source of income. This system makes the border centers the most productive in the nation: internal Grifols documents reviewed by Dodt, Strozyk, & Lind, 2019 reveal that border centers receive more than 2,300 average paid donations a week, more than twice the 1,000 average paid donations received by other centers in the U.S. These documents also reveal the dependence the donors have upon this vampiric embrace: the border centers top the lists of those with donors who donate 75 or more times a year.

We can now see that activities related to organ trafficking occur all the time in the United States even though nobody calls it that because, as the International Labour Organization now infamously argued, it's perfectly legal. Furthermore, these trafficked persons are also not counted in current estimates of slavery thanks to the

aforementioned group of silly geese, thereby hiding the vastness of the problem as well as raising questions as to the effectiveness of both demand reduction and intelligence-based approaches to combating trafficking. There's simply no good way to detect such trafficking, and no way to address it after it has occurred. A much more preemptive approach is clearly needed.



Figure 8.26. *Dystopia.*

Moreover, there is clearly a great deal of trafficking that occurs at the border, as the

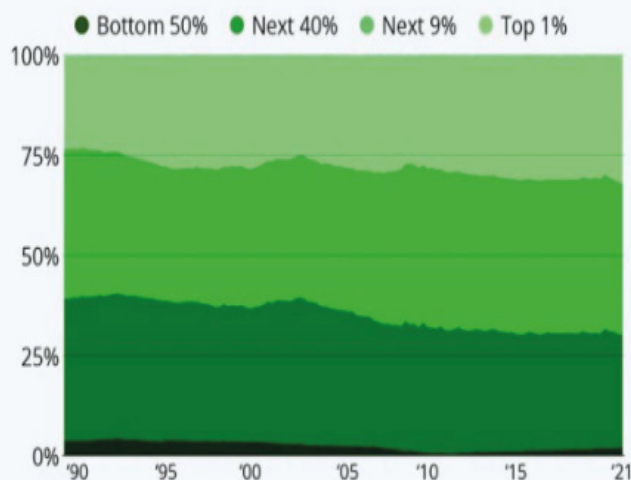
media so often claim. However, it's not being conducted by criminal Mexican cartels, nor even by the United States government as many conspiracy theorists would have us believe. Instead, much of it is being done by for-profit American corporations.²⁷ While this may seem a shocking development at first, it makes a tremendous amount of sense when we analyze it. It is important to understand that I am not speaking of "corporate conspiracy" as per the typical left-wing understanding that corporations are inherently evil in and of themselves, but rather as a fact that if one wants to go into business, the first step one takes is to form an LLC or other legally recognized financial entity. (Slavery, as we've seen, is very big business.) This further illustrates the corporate nature and businesslike organization behind most slavery rings. It should therefore surprise no one that over 80% of all trafficking cases lead back to a corporation of some sort (source redacted). Again, literally *anyone* can be a trafficker of persons, as this is fundamentally a financial crime motivated by greed (Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021). The commodities in this case just happen to be human beings.

This fundamentally ties back to the key underlying vulnerability that is poverty. One of the top arguments made against addressing this critical vulnerability is that it would harm local, small businesses. We are frequently told by groups such as the Cicero Institute that making housing more affordable would harm local landlords, or that raising the minimum wage would put small, family-owned businesses out of business since they tend to pay the lowest wages and employ the majority of the country's lowest paid workers. As one might have come to expect from our discussion to date, this is obviously not the case. In fact, the exact opposite is true: 66% of America's lowest-paid wage earners work for large corporations that employ 100 or more employees, 92% of the top fifty of which made a profit in 2012 (Center for Hunger-Free Communities, 2021).

The profits these companies make are truly obscene compared to what workers earn: of the 50 aforementioned top employers of low-wage workers, the typical executive compensation package totaled more than \$9.4 million. It is well-documented that from 1978 to 2019, the typical pay for a worker grew only by 18% whereas CEO pay grew by a whopping 1322%. Moreover, these companies additionally returned approximately \$174.8 billion to shareholders in either dividends or buybacks from 2007 to 2012. Much of this excess profit was produced by cutting the benefits provided to employees. In instances where they do provide benefits, such corporations pay a dramatically lower share of healthcare and insurance premiums than those who don't employ low-wage workers, leaving these earners on the hook for larger premiums despite having less income to pay for them (Center for Hunger-Free Communities, 2021). This feeds the vast economic inequality that creates the phenomena that this work is concerned with, and the consequences reach farther than I can describe in one volume.

Top 10 Percent Own 70 Percent of U.S. Wealth

Distribution of total U.S. net worth 1989-2021 (in percent)



Percent of aggregate, not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis



statista

Figure 8.27. (Buchholz, 2021) *Distribution of U.S. net worth, 1989-2021*, using Federal Reserve data. Additional insight into the nature of slavery and perpetration can be gained by overlaying this data with the information found in Demand Abolition, 2018, p. 19; Henderson, Sheffield, & Carlton; Polaris, 2023, Fig. 2; and Figs. 8.1, 8.3. Poverty keeps a select population vulnerable to trafficking so that sex remains a commodity for those who can afford it. This dynamic is also visible in the sex trafficking of tenants by landlords. Even further insight can be gained by comparing this data to the data for the period 1760-1790 presented in Morrison & Snyder, 2000, with respect to what we saw occur in the nursing home industry when COVID-19 struck: a house of cards cannot survive even minor stress, much less severe strain. I'm sure it'll be totally fine though; nobody lost their heads in the 1790s, least of all in France of all places (see Scheidel, 2018). James 5:1-6.

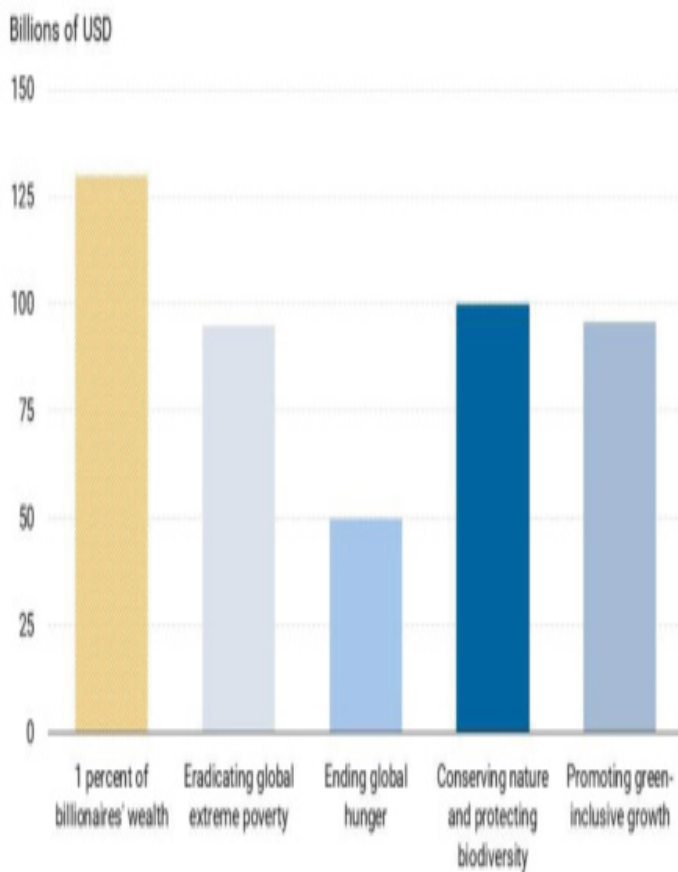
From here, the global portrait of this monster begins to truly come into focus. As of 2022, nearly two and a half times the population of the United States (828 *million* people) suffer from hunger around the world (World Food Program, USA, 2022). Of these 828 million, 345 million – or approximately the population of the United States – suffer from the most severe levels of hunger, including starvation. This makes these individuals highly at risk of experiencing human trafficking and other enslavement schemes. In such dire circumstances, traffickers need only promise a mere meal to recruit these incredibly vulnerable people.

Estimates as to how much it would take to eliminate this fundamental issue from the slavery equation vary, but not by much. In 2022, the World Food Program estimated that it would take \$40 billion a year (\$320 billion total) above current funding to eliminate hunger worldwide. A similar study published two years prior which was supported by the German government put the total price tag at \$330 billion (Ahmed, 2020). In 2016, a group of experts put the number at approximately \$11 billion per year (\$154 billion), noting that the public spending would cause an additional \$5 billion in private investment per year (an additional \$70 billion, bringing the total to \$224 billion; Laborde, Bizikova, Lallemand, & Smaller, 2016).

To eliminate not just hunger but all of *poverty* in the United States, on the other hand, would require less than 3% of the country's GDP (Unknown, 2018). Such a proposal as outlined in Widerquist, 2017 would provide a benefit to most households with an annual income up to \$55,000, essentially serving as a tax cut for some 43.1 million Americans (including 14.5 million children) per 2015 data, reducing the poverty rate of the entire population to net zero (Widerquist, 2017; Unknown, 2018). For comparison, 3.5% of all U.S. GDP in 2021 alone was spent on defense (The World Bank). In 2006, economist David Sachs estimated that the amount needed to end extreme poverty²⁸ worldwide was \$175 billion a year for twenty years (Gorius, 2017). Now, this all seems like an awful lot of money, but this latest figure is less than 1% of the combined income of the richest countries in the world (which, incidentally, experience the highest per capita rates of enslaved persons, Walk Free, 2023), and it is merely four times the U.S. military's budget for the year it was calculated. Addressing global hunger would probably be great press for the United States and its wealthy allies, doing more to spread democratic values and freedom than have the countless wars waged in the name of such notions (not to mention effectively countering China's Belt and Road Initiative to boot).

Of course, this merely takes into account publicly available funds. The situation is even more amenable to remedy when one looks to wealth that is held in private coffers. In 2021, the increase of the wealth of billionaires in the United States alone was over \$1 *trillion* (World Food Program USA, 2022).²⁹ As of 2021, there were 2,755 billionaires in the world holding an estimated net worth of \$13.2 trillion (the total global economy was estimated to be about \$94 trillion in size in 2021, meaning that these 2,755 people alone own 14% of the world's total wealth; Neufield, 2021; Kharas, 2021; see also Fig. 8.28). Economists at the Brookings Institution in 2021 estimated that it would take \$95 billion annually to eradicate extreme poverty across the world, with additional investments of \$39 to \$50 billion to achieve a world without hunger by 2030 (Kharas, 2021). Merely 1% of billionaires' collective wealth, equivalent to a tax rate of 15-20% on their accrued income, would result in a flow of cash totaling \$130 billion to address the problem –

more than enough to solve the crisis, dramatically cutting trafficking rates across the entire globe. These estimates are for additional funding needed to supplement current aid, which in 2021 totaled approximately \$160 billion, counting literally each and every single country and multilateral institution combined.



Source: Author's calculations

BROOKINGS

Figure 8.28. (Kharas, 2021) *Global developments that could be funded by 1% of billionaires' wealth.* Per Kharas, 2021, 708 million people would be lifted from extreme poverty, an additional 800 million would be rescued from acute food insecurity, and a further 1.5 billion would be safe from moderate food insecurity. Note that these numbers are even larger now because of the COVID-19 pandemic, as is the collective wealth of billionaires.

Additionally, while the author tends to be inclined toward defending the necessity of

military and intelligence expenditures, the simple truth of the matter is that the defense budget is quite bloated. Some of these funds could be better allocated to offset the costs of addressing hunger and poverty, thereby reducing the national security threat imposed by human trafficking. For instance, the American military spends a remarkable \$41.6 million dollars on Viagra alone annually, but waiting times at Veterans Affairs hospitals remain a punchline among those who've served (Lee, 2023).³⁰ More to the point is that an absolutely astounding \$84 billion worth of equipment and cash was left behind in the fall of Kabul in August of 2021 (Prado, 2023; see also Zarnowski, 2023; Landay & Holland, 2023). Largely overnight, the Taliban went from being a small, reasonably well-armed criminal cartel to the 26th most powerful army in the entire world.

Now, if the United States could afford to do *that*, maybe all of that money (and all of the money invested in waging war in Afghanistan during the twenty years America was involved in the country) would have been better spent making it so that American citizens didn't have to sell their vital fluids and tissues (or themselves sexually) just to afford food and rent?³¹ This doesn't even consider the country's misadventures in Iraq, or the lasting and far-reaching consequences of the Global War on Terror on the rest of the world and the slavery rings this desperation and horror generated. Such aggressive foreign policies coupled with a lack of social investment at home are incredibly self-destructive, as evidenced by the fact that food insecurity among Americans has increased at a rate surpassing that of military spending in the 2020s (Semler, 2023).³²

Much more to the point, is this the promise that modernity holds for nations that are traditionally considered "underdeveloped" – for their citizens to have to resort to such insane desperation just to put food in their mouths and find shelter over their heads? If so, then the superpowers might want to rethink their messaging (Walk Free, 2023; Graeber & Wengrow, 2023).

Or we could just get corporations to pay their taxes. Microsoft alone owes more than \$29 billion in back taxes, yet for some reason the people who suffer the most from such oversights think it's a really good idea to defund the IRS (Kiel, 2023; Kiel & Eisenger, 2018). This amount owed by one single corporation is more than the Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates it would cost to outright end homelessness in the United States (Adler, 2021).

Of course, there is another fantastic source of funding that we can hit up: churches. The world's religious institutions sit on a tremendous amount of wealth and value. In the United States, these institutions are exempt from being taxed as they are allegedly apolitical and confined to a charitable nature. Of course, this often isn't the case. As almost anyone who has stepped inside an allegedly "apolitical" church in America in the past thirty years can tell you, it's quite common for holy men of all kinds to make resounding political endorsements despite their 501(c)(3) status. In fact, remarkably few religious institutions seem to get in trouble for violating the law so egregiously in this manner (see Cruz, 2023). Moreover, aren't such places supposed to feed and house the poor out of a matter of devotion to their supposedly sacred principles? Isn't hoarding wealth and money, you know, ostensibly kind of frowned upon by these places?³³

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 112 Catholic Dioceses in the United States sat on approximately \$10 billion in liquid assets (Dunklin & Rezendes, 2021). Now here's the thing about this money: it wasn't going toward feeding the poor. It wasn't being spent on healing the sick. It wasn't even being spent on Sunday School lessons. It was

literally just sitting in a bank account.³⁴ Yet, despite this incredible insurance against the economic downturn of the pandemic, the Church didn't actually spend or distribute any of this money to those who were affected by the global outbreak. Instead, these 112 Dioceses collected nearly \$1.5 billion in taxpayer-provided aid during the pandemic; together, the nation's 200-odd Dioceses collected more than \$3 billion in total. The Catholic Dioceses of Charlotte, North Carolina collected \$8 million alone from the government's "small business" relief program. Yet, there's no need to pick solely on the Catholic Church, as it may appear that I have done so far. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was found to have illegally laundered a whopping \$32 billion (with a B) in 2018, having to pay only a mere \$5 million (with a M) penalty in later 2023 to avoid criminal liability (Meyersohn, 2023).³⁵

Clearly, the massive risk factor that is poverty could be eradicated if we *really* wanted to be done with it. We know how to get rid of it, and we actually have the resources to do so. Yet, it seems to be simply too useful to societies – or, at least, certain aspects of poverty are useful to certain people – to dispose of it completely. It's almost as if its continued existence, much like slavery, is completely intentional (Desmond, 2023).

Who owns more wealth, the Bottom 80% or the Top 5%?

States refer to groups in the wealth distribution of each country.

Data: World Inequality Database; numbers for 2021.

Twitter: @stataxman



Figure 8.29. (Mathisen, 2022) *One of the many faces of Jörmungandr.* Provided as evidence lest the reader feels my methodology is not applicable to other countries or societies. This is, as I've noted, hardly a uniquely American phenomenon but rather an aspect of the current human condition.

This means that they shouldn't be arrested and charged with a prostitution-related offense. One

would think this would be obvious, yet here I am, writing a book.

- ² Schwarz, et al., 2018, p. 119.
- ³ Schwarz, et al., 2018, p. 123.
- ⁴ This is a fantastic time to reread the discussion in the Chapter 2 on the Dunning-Kruger effect.
- ⁵ The author is admittedly spitballing here. More research is needed to confirm this spitball.
- ⁶ Additional research is needed to truly empirically confirm a relationship between a lack of affordable housing and increased trafficking, but enough data exists for this conclusion to be asserted.
- ⁷ This neatly coincides with the interests of the policing industry – more work for police means more police jobs needed, serving as a covert form of copaganda. See Kurtz, 2023.
- ⁸ For the record, I don't believe Melton and Israel are cognitively aware of how they're being played and how their fundamental, core beliefs are being manipulated.
- ⁹ Again, in cases of children running away from home, their respective homes and families need to be thoroughly investigated. We can't just keep reuniting trafficker and victim or pedophile and child and patting ourselves on the back for a job well done.
- ¹⁰ AKA sex trafficking.
- ¹¹ Also sex trafficking.
- ¹² Polaris, 2018, p. 19.
- ¹³ This is an incredible finding considering that only about 5% of the general population identifies as LGBT: that means that in this sample, this population is overrepresented among the trafficked by a factor of 10. This will be explored in more depth in the following chapter.
- ¹⁴ Lest we forget, the TVPA of 2000 also applies.
- ¹⁵ Quoted in Read, 2022.
- ¹⁶ I really hope the litigation lawyers are enjoying all the fodder I'm giving them.
- ¹⁷ Sexism and toxic masculinity hurt men too (Nelson, 2019). See also Coleman, Feigelman, & Rosen, 2020; Rogers, DeLay, & Martin, 2017.
- ¹⁸ Because this is so totally healthy for society and not at all contributing to the problem whatsoever (Nelson, 2019; Coleman, Feigelman, & Rosen, 2020; Rogers, DeLay, & Martin, 2017; Ricardo & Baker, 2008; Krivoshchekov, Gulevich, & Blagov, 2023).
- ¹⁹ This goes far beyond the ACE of child poverty, as we'll see: it explains how generational cycles of trauma are perpetuated.
- ²⁰ See Rogers, DeLay, & Martin, 2017 as to why this gap doesn't persist between the sexes.
- ²¹ Read: stupidity. So, so much stupidity.
- ²² Khullar & Chokshi, 2018 and Chetty, et al., 2016 should be considered in context of both McGhee, 2022 and Metzl, 2020. This should then be considered in context of Safi, Anwari, & Safi,

- ²³ So much for solidarity among the working class; see also Udland, 2015.
- ²⁴ See Tober & Kroløkke, 2021, Barnett & Smith, 2006, and Harley, 2019 for more information on this trade.
- ²⁵ See (Scheider, 2020) for a fascinating, albeit horrifying, history of this entire episode.
- ²⁶ It's important to pay attention to the wordplay. This is a common theme that emerges across all trafficking schemes.
- ²⁷ Just wait until we unpack the phenomenon of "missing" migrant children. To my dear colleague Hannah Dreier, please keep up the good work.
- ²⁸ Extreme poverty is defined as being among the poorest in the world: living on less than \$1.90 a day in 2021 numbers (Harack, 2010; Kharas, 2021). To put this into context, think of what we saw happening in our examination of Congo.
- ²⁹ It's quite peculiar how those who are the loudest in warning about the dangers of the potential redistribution of wealth sound absolutely no alarm when said wealth is redistributed into their own pockets (Hanauer & Rolf, 2020).
- ³⁰ Moreover, God forbid a woman serving in the military wants an abortion.
- ³¹ "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." – Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., exactly one year before his assassination.
- ³² This betrays a core truth that will be explored more in the next chapter: slavery doesn't merely harm the enslaved, but the slavemasters themselves. Galatians 6:7.
- ³³ Matthew 19:24.
- ³⁴ Matthew 21:12-13.
- ³⁵ As we saw in the case of Stephanie Costa and the Bedford Care Homes, a common trend contributing to the phenomena discussed here is how white-collar crime does not get punished as does all other crime: one can expect a harsher criminal sentence for petty theft than from trafficking hundreds of workers. This plays heavily into the issue of forced criminality in human trafficking dynamics.



Figure 8.3. (Source redacted, 2023) *Motives of women in the sex trade.* Poverty is a driving force behind entering the sex industry, be it either consensually or via trafficking (Hall, 2014; Greenwood, 2019; Puschila, 2022). Moralistic judgements help no one, as this image makes clear.

Chapter 9

Removing Our Blinders: Gender and Sexuality

“Those who are able to see beyond the shadows and lies of their culture will never be understood, let alone believed, by the masses.”

– Plato

“The shaman is a person who is able to transcend the dimensional confines of cultural existence. They know more than the people they serve. The people they serve are like children within the game of culture. Only the shaman knows that culture is a game. Everyone else takes it seriously. That’s how he can do his magic.”

– Terrence McKenna

The last chapter on poverty revealed an interesting trend: those who are members of the LGBT+ community experience predispositions to entering the slave trade at significantly higher rates than their non-LGBT+ peers. This points to a critical insight regarding culture and society that warrants further exploration.

Trafficking and the LGBT+ Community

Polaris data on survivors of human trafficking show that 45% of survivors interviewed reported being a member of a sexual minority (defined as being gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.), 8% reported identifying as a gender minority (such as being nonbinary or gender non-conforming), and 5% of survivors reported being transgender (Polaris, 2023).

These numbers should give us pause for several reasons. First is the fact that nearly half of all those trafficking survivors appear to be members of the LGBT+ community. Yet LGBT+ persons account for only about 5% of the total U.S. adult population (2020 Census; Conron & Goldberg, 2020; Herman, Flores, & O’Neill, 2022; and Wilson & Meyer, 2021). By contrast, only 4% of all American adults identify as a sexual minority (Conron & Goldberg, 2020) and only 0.5% identify as a gender minority (Wilson &

Meyer, 2021), with 0.52% identifying as transgender (Herman, Flores, and O'Neill, 2022).¹ What accounts for the dramatic overrepresentation of these groups among trafficking victims?

One must initially consider sampling error as a possible cause for this disparity. The authors of Polaris, 2023 are in fact quick to point out that the numbers they reported are not necessarily representative of the entire trafficked population. Estimates of those currently trapped in slavery, one must recall, are notoriously incomplete and misleading. Thus, even I initially discounted this large over-representation of LGBT+ persons in such estimates in some of my previous work (see Zarnowski, 2023). Yet there is substantial evidence that these results are *not* due to a sampling bias in Polaris, 2023's methodology for the simple reason that these findings are remarkably consistent across other studies. What's more is the fact that these results may actually reflect underestimates of the rate at which this uniquely vulnerable population experiences trafficking. This bears further exploration.

If the data are even remotely accurate, at least half of those who are trafficked in the modern slave trade are members of a very small portion of the general population, that is, they are members of the LGBT+ community. This is incredibly significant, fundamentally insane, and should come as nothing less than a ho-lee sh*t moment for the anti-trafficking movement. And again, not to beat a dead horse, but *this finding is almost universal across studies*.

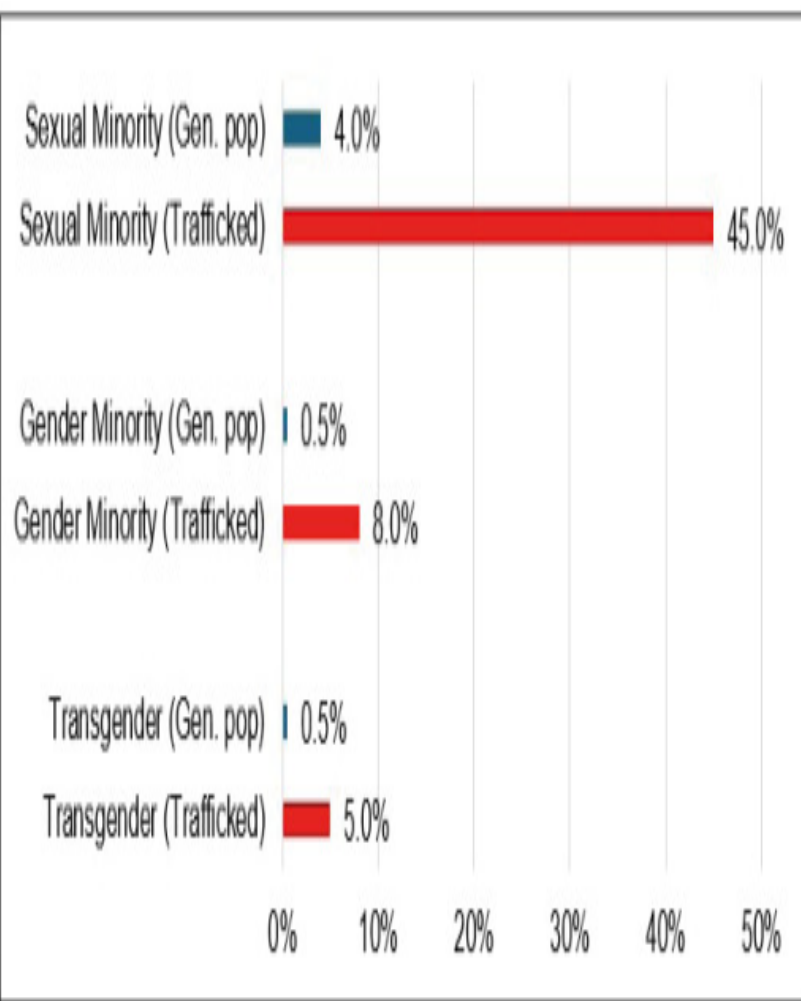


Figure 9.1. (Zarnowski, 2023). *LGBT+ proportions in the general population vs. among trafficking victims.* (Data compiled from the 2020 Census; Polaris, 2023; Conron & Goldberg, 2020; Herman, Flores, & O'Neill, 2022; and Wilson & Meyer, 2021.) Note that these populations may overlap and intersect in ways that are not apparent.

From this, we find that individuals who are members of sexual minorities experience

trafficking at a stunning rate of 11 times that of those who are strictly heterosexual; gender minorities at a rate 16 times those who are cisgender; and transgender individuals at a rate nearly 10 times that of their cisgender peers. Astounding as these figures are, they may also be underestimates due to the uniquely open ways that sexuality and gender can intersect in the LGBT+ community, such as with a gay or bisexual transgender individual. To put this in perspective, not even biological sex or race is a greater risk factor than LGBT+ status in calculating one's odds of experiencing slavery. Of the respondents in the 2023 Polaris National Survivors' Survey, 86% were women, representing an increased risk factor of 1.71 times that of their male peers (US Census; Polaris, 2023). In a 2011 review, 40% of survivors were Black, revealing an increased racial risk factor of 2.94 times that of their White peers (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011; Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). While these disparities are significant and concerning, they pale in comparison to those for the LGBT+ community.

This begs a number of questions. Why isn't this pattern better known and acknowledged? Why have we been completely missing this obvious trend for at least the past thirty years? Why, when the LGBT+ population is mentioned in anti-trafficking literature, is it so often merely in a footnote or only with a side comment that lacks even a citation?

The answer lies in the shortcomings of the human mind discussed in Chapter 2. Prejudice and bias play such outsized roles in determining who becomes enslaved that the most marginalized populations are significantly more likely to be entrapped by the societal structures that humans project from their psyches. Cultural norms marginalize vulnerable groups into extreme situations where they are repeatedly subject to exploitation by those who are not similarly marginalized, so much so that the experience becomes normalized (see Xian, Chock, & Swiggins, 2017).

The very identities of LGBT+ persons are at odds with these societal norms and cultural structures, resulting in this grave risk of marginalization. To add insult to injury, the identity of LGBT+ persons conflicts with the accepted concept of the "good victim." That is, the accepted norm of what constitutes a victim in the eyes of the public (including investigators, social workers, advocates, and even family members) is dissonant with the lived experiences of victims in general, but LGBT+ victims experience an amplified form of this dissonance. Quoting Boukli & Renz, 2018,

LGBT trafficking victims also carry the blame for supposedly victimizing religious communities and therefore 'blame', 'innocence', 'good' and 'evil' proliferate in pre-existing hierarchies of victimhood. Such dichotomous versions of victimage exacerbate the difficulty of accommodating victims perceived as 'deviant', while they further expand the reach of punitiveness (Weitzer, 2007).

Conservative and religious anti-trafficking activism further counterpose LGBT protection, which attests to an unfound middle ground between the polarities of accepted victim and offender status.

Thus, the intrinsic problem of culture of societal norms (as well as bias and prejudice) is exposed: the anti-trafficking movement has been looking for trafficking victims that fit their definition of what a victim *should* look like, not what victims *actually* look like because such actual victims don't fit their internal, mental schema of a "victim." The overly religious and conservative nature of much, if not most, of the anti-trafficking

movement explains why victims of human trafficking are overwhelmingly portrayed as being white, blonde, blue-eyed, Christian, and strictly heterosexual, despite actual trafficked populations hardly ever consisting of such individuals. More to the point at hand, this composition of alleged abolitionists and advocates – including those who created and adopted the TVPA of 2000 – is a clear causal factor as to why the LGBT+ population is so frequently overlooked by the anti-trafficking movement despite the population's gross overrepresentation among those trapped in the modern slave trade (Reisenwitz, 2021; see also Xian, Chock, & Swiggins, 2017; Boukli & Renz, 2018).²

Specifically pertinent to trends in DMST is the fact that LGBT+ children also experience a significantly higher rate of exploitation compared to their adult peers (Xian, Chock, & Swiggins, 2017). Much as LGBT+ adults don't satisfy the definition of a "good victim," LGBT+ youth, through no act other than identifying as LGBT+, are often classified outside the definition of a "good child." Of course, "good behavior" is an arbitrary construct created by adults that consists of a nuclear family, where parents exercise authority and children are obedient and conform to the standards set for them:

This aspiration of idyllic behavior creates more problems and harm than we realize, to both the family unit and to society as a whole. When youth do not act according to the "good behavior" paradigm, they are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than their obedient counterparts. Unfortunately, instead of recognizing the responsibility of society to widen its definition of "good" or acceptable behavior, youth that exist outside of societal ideals are often misidentified, abused, criminalized, condemned, incarcerated, and re-victimized.³

As a result, LGBT+ children and youth fall victim to both interpersonal and structural abuses much more often than their non-LGBT+ peers, rendering them exceptionally vulnerable to trafficking schemes. As we'll see shortly, this vulnerability originates in large part from two primary sources. First is the homophobic/transphobic reaction from parents and guardians, which in turn leads to abandonment, family rejection, and/or emotional, physical, or sexual abuse – such as "corrective" rape or so-called conversion "therapy." The second source is that found in societal structures and institutions, such as the systemic discrimination found in the justice, education, and medical and mental healthcare systems.

There is more to this than one might initially suppose. Sexism and the resulting gender bias and gender norms that such sexism perpetuates results in LGBT+ boys and men being overlooked in trafficking circumstances (Barron & Frost, 2018). In particular, the innate assumption embedded in allegedly "traditional" (AKA toxic) masculinity that men are *not* vulnerable, least of all to sexual exploitation, dramatically hinders our understanding of the victimization of all men and boys, not just those in the LGBT+ populations. Thus, it is critical to understand that such notions of masculinity and gender norms not only pose a threat as it pertains to violence against women, but to the well-being of men and boys (Nelson, 2019; Wrangham & Peterson, 1997; see also Coleman, Feigelman, & Rosen, 2020; Rogers, DeLay, & Martin, 2017; Ricardo & Baker, 2008; Krivoshchekov, Gulevich, & Blagov, 2023). The number of men who are victims of human trafficking is largely unknown due to issues of underreporting that are compounded by the social and cultural norms just described.

The current climate of nonsensical conspiracy theories, disinformation, and noxious

expectations of what constitutes masculinity/femininity actually serves to obfuscate genuine cases of trafficking and sexual abuse (Pesta, 2022). This dramatically hinders the ability of male victims and survivors, LGBT+ or not, to come forward and get help. As trauma therapist and author Shari Botwin explains,

We live in a culture where men are assumed to be perpetrators and women are the victims; gender bias in this area leaves men feeling shamed and disbelieved ... Male survivors often suffer in silence for decades — most of the men I have counseled did not start speaking about what had happened to them until their late fifties or early sixties.⁴

Much to this point is the prevalence of boys and male victims in the production of Child Sexual Abuse Material, or **CSAM**. CSAM is much more commonly referred to as “child pornography;” however, one should refer to such material as CSAM due to the fact that the term “pornography” implies the notion that the person in the material consented. It should be plainly understood by now that a child/minor cannot consent to such sexual acts. To the point under consideration, well over half of CSAM victims are males (Barron & Frost, 2018). Labor trafficking, an already notoriously difficult form of trafficking to detect, is another area where such outdated gender notions hinder our perception due to ideas that men should “man up.” For LGBT+ individuals, threats to harm families, physical and sexual abuse on the job, and working conditions contribute to victimization rates and the silencing of individuals who are exploited. Additionally, Barron & Frost make the poignant point that some men who experience trafficking do not identify with being “gay” or any other LGBT+ identity at all (or perhaps do not want to “out” themselves or be associated with the LGBT+ community for fear of reprisal or stigmatization), and thus will not seek support from a LGBT+ service provider, further preventing these boys and men from getting help.

If one is concerned about male survivors and victims of both abuse and trafficking, then one must be concerned about the welfare of the LGBT+ community as well. The victimization of both groups is so interrelated that both must be included in any trafficking analysis. As but one example, rigid notions of masculinity and gender norms played a significant role in the abuse and eventual trafficking of Jose Alfaro. Jose was gay and displayed an affection for Barbie dolls as a child, something that his father attempted to “correct” through the use of aggressive, abusive corporal punishment (Pesta, 2022). Things got worse as Jose entered his teenage years, and his father eventually kicked him out of the house, largely because Jose would not conform to his father’s view of masculinity, sexuality, and gender norms. Without housing, Jose turned to an early LGBT+ social networking site, where he met a man in his early thirties who claimed he wanted to help Jose.⁵ Of course, that “help” came in the form of a job at a massage parlor, where Jose was ruthlessly sex trafficked.

From this we begin to see how isolated from the rest of society LGBT+ persons really are, having effectively been prevented from accessing the world outside of their small community. This renders such individuals extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Further compounding this matter is the stigma that is associated with being LGBT+, making same-sex prostitution and sex work even more obscure than usual, thus, making LGBT+ sex trafficking even more veiled (Martinez & Kelle, 2013). Consequently, sex trafficking of LGBT+ individuals is even less likely to be reported to authorities than heterosexual trafficking. Immigration status (and anti-immigrant rhetoric found in one’s

local jurisdiction) is often an additional factor compounding a factor that keeps victims from coming forward for fear of being deported by police and border officials. The role of law enforcement cannot be overstated here, not so much as a solution to the issue of LGBT+ victimization, but rather as a contributing factor as to why the problem continues unabated.

Law enforcement officers tend to reflect the norms and values of the societies they police, and this is reflected in their prejudices and biases. Police officers are, after all, human and part of the societies in which they exist. If a person grows up in a society in which people of a particular race or gender identity are stigmatized or culturally shunned, then that person is likely to carry the same bias with them into whatever position they later hold in that society, including law enforcement. That is fundamentally, after all, what law enforcement is all about – the enforcement of a society's norms and values as codified in statutes. If the society's values are socially conservative, then the society's police force will similarly be socially conservative; if the society's values are socially liberal, then the society's law enforcement will operate in a similar vein. For some reason that may be seen as particularly peculiar to foreign audiences, it is considered remarkably impolite and even downright unpatriotic to point this out in the United States: merely highlighting this fundamental dynamic and how it impacts policing is enough to get one labeled an anarchist or as somehow undermining the effectiveness of the police, if not national security itself.

I'm sure this has absolutely nothing to do with funding regimes or how resources are allocated among departments (Roscigno & Preito-Hodge, 2021; Root, 2022; Manthey, Esposito, & Hernandez, 2022).

Indeed, the biases of some police forces and individual officers are often reflected in their official operations. LGBT+ individuals frequently report instances of harassment, profiling, neglect, entrapment, verbal abuse, and physical assault at the hands of law enforcement (Xian, Chock, & Swiggins, 2017). Highlighting this effect, the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey Report found that a remarkable 58% of transgender individuals experienced some form of mistreatment at the hands of police (Leonard, 2021). Criminalization, neglect, and misconduct directed towards homeless LGBT+ children and youth populations are similarly predominant and contribute to the high rates of trafficking and traumatization of this population (Xian, Chock, & Swiggins, 2017). Approximately 30% of trafficked Black and multiracial transgender women reported being automatically *assumed* to be sex workers by law enforcement, although these same law enforcement officers (LEOs) never bothered to ask whether these women they merely assumed to be sex workers were being coerced into such work (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014, P. 32). A similar finding was reported in a 2012 study examining transgender Hispanic women and girls. Despite having been arrested on prostitution-related charges multiple times, the women had never once been asked by law enforcement if they had been forced or coerced into such acts, not even those who were minors and who were thus automatically victims of sex trafficking under the TVPA of 2000.⁶

Such prejudice and asymmetrical interactions resulted in approximately 60% of all transgender respondents declaring that they would not feel comfortable in asking law enforcement for assistance, per the 2015 report. One good reason for this can be found in Fehrenbacher, et al., 2020. This ethnographic study found that transgender

individuals with no experiences “consistent” with the UN Palermo Protocol’s definition of trafficking were prone to discrimination by law enforcement because they were perceived as being “less exploitable” than their cisgender peers, especially cisgender women. This, of course, is the exact opposite of what the data reflects and what our chains-of-risk model demonstrates. In similar form, these transgender individuals, despite clearly having been trafficked and meeting all relevant criteria for having experienced such exploitation, did not identify as trafficking victims or survivors of human trafficking.

This finding is perhaps best explained by the gatekeeping of anti-trafficking advocates which, similar to law enforcement, did not identify the transgender individuals as victims when presented with the opportunity, and thus denied them access to anti-trafficking services (Fehrenbacher, et al., 2020). The same ethnographic study revealed that Black, Indigenous, and persons of color (BIPOC) transgender women faced increased exclusion, discrimination, and hyper-criminalization not merely for their gender but also for their race in a form of enhanced, uber-misogynoir that cisgender women of color were not subjected to. Much to this point is that 44% of LGBT+ and HIV-affected persons who attempted to access emergency shelter services in 2015 were denied access to these services, with 71% reporting that the denial was related to gender identity (NCAVP, 2016, p. 27).⁷

Such blatant misconduct leads to the LGBT+ community being easily and repeatedly victimized. The transgender community is especially vulnerable to this. In one instance, a 16-year-old transgender woman accepted a job as a cashier at a bar, only to be entrapped by the owner and trafficked to customers for sex. The police subsequently raided the bar, finding the young woman locked up and being prostituted against her will. Quoting the survivor,

The police raided us and pushed us outside. They left me in a men’s shelter with nothing but my clothes. My dad had to go and get me out. We found the owner of the bar, but she wouldn’t pay me the salary she owed me.⁸

Reporters for *InSight Crime* followed up on the story and found that both police and court records of the October 23, 2014 incident detailed “acts against morality” as having occurred on the bar’s premises, but nothing identifies the young woman as having been recovered as a victim (Vega, 2019). The young woman was later re-trafficked. The biases and prejudices at play here are frequently a factor among immigration cases as well (Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014, p. 32). In 2015 alone, 31% of LGBT+ survivors of intimate partner violence reported being subjected to mis-arrest, or arrest wherein the victim of violence is arrested instead of the perpetrator, a disturbing 17% increase from the previous year (NCAVP, 2016, p. 27).

As of 2021, 31,659 cases of human trafficking had been reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline since 2007 (Giovagnoni, 2021). Only 418, or approximately 1.3%, were reported as being connected to the LGBT+ population, which accounts for nearly 5.2% of the U.S. population and approximately half of all persons experiencing human trafficking.

No wonder we’re not seeing any progress on this issue after so many years: we are absolutely, fundamentally missing the forest for the trees.

The horrific levels of object abuse, harassment, and sexual violence that LGBT+

persons experience begins early in their lives, frequently in kindergarten if not earlier (NSVRC & PCAR, 2012). Unsurprisingly, LGBT+ children are much more likely than their peers to report one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and after experiencing one ACE, they are predisposed to experiencing more (Merrick, Ford, Ports, & Guinn, 2018). An astounding 22% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual teens report having been raped, and LGBT+ youth are on average more than four times as likely to report having been the victims of child sexual abuse than their peers (Darkness to Light, 2021). This level of violence results in more than one in ten gay, lesbian, or bisexual K-12 students missing school during any given 30-day period out of fear for their physical safety due specifically to their LGBT+ status. Additionally, more than 40% of these students report seriously considering suicide due to the harassment and terror they face on a daily basis, with 29% having already having attempted suicide in the previous year.

As adults, these numbers increase substantially given that these young people have now experienced more of life. Bisexual persons are particularly vulnerable to interpersonal violence when compared to gay or lesbian persons. While 35% of heterosexual women experience rape, physical violence, or stalking at the hands of an intimate partner, this number increases to 44% for lesbians and to 61% for bisexual women (Human Rights Campaign). Thirteen per cent of lesbians report having been raped, compared to 17% of heterosexual women and nearly half of all bisexual women, at 46%. Additionally, nearly half of all bisexual rape survivors, 48%, reported their first rape as having occurred between the ages of eleven and seventeen. Intimate partner rape was reported by 9% of heterosexual women, compared to 22% of bisexual women.

These patterns hold when examining bisexual male populations as well, and thus there is reason to believe they hold when examining gay, lesbian, and bisexual transgender and gender minority populations. Among heterosexual men, 21% report having experienced sexual violence other than rape, compared to 40% of gay men and 47% of bisexual men. Additionally, 29% percent of heterosexual men report suffering from rape, stalking, or physical assault at the hands of an intimate partner, compared to 26% of gay men and 37% of bisexual men (Human Rights Campaign). Similarly, the aforementioned 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey reported that 47% of transgender persons experience sexual assault at some point during their lives, but this is likely an underestimate given the results of other studies of this population. Indigenous (65%), multiracial (59%), Middle Eastern (58%), and Black (53%) transgender individuals were the most likely to report sexual assault in their lifetime, but again, these numbers are tragically likely underestimates given the findings of other studies and the difficulty in accurately estimating the transgender population (Chalabi, 2014).

Studies out of Massachusetts reported by the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) provide further evidence of this, as well as of the general issue of underreported sexual abuse. Of 103 transgender women surveyed who were living in the state, 60% reported being raped with 38% suffering from multiple, repeated incidents of sexual assault (BARCC). A similar study in the same state revealed how widespread sexual harassment, abuse, and even assault is among youth and minors. Among lesbian and bisexual girls, 23% reported rape or attempted rape at the hands of their peers compared to 6% of heterosexual girls. Similarly, lesbian and bisexual girls were significantly more likely (63%) than their heterosexual peers (52%) to be “touched, brushed up against, or cornered in a sexual way” while also being more likely (50%) to

be grabbed or experience their clothing being pulled in a sexual way than heterosexual girls (44%). Heterosexual girls, while experiencing being called “sexually offensive names” at a sickening rate of 63%, nonetheless experienced less harassment than lesbian and bisexual girls (72%).

Thus, it shouldn’t be surprising to find that children who identify as members of sexual minorities are significantly more likely to experience child sexual abuse (CSA), parental physical abuse, assault at school, or to miss school due to fear (Friedman, et al, 2011). These risks are worse for boys than girls as predispositions to sexual abuse, worse for girls than boys for experiencing assault at school, and worse for bisexual children (boys and girls) than gay boys or lesbian girls for experiencing parental physical abuse or for missing school due to fear. These disparities in experiences of abuse and maltreatment, Friedman and his colleagues concluded, are likely one of the key driving factors of higher rates of substance abuse, mental health issues, risky sexual behavior, and HIV infection reported by adults of this population.

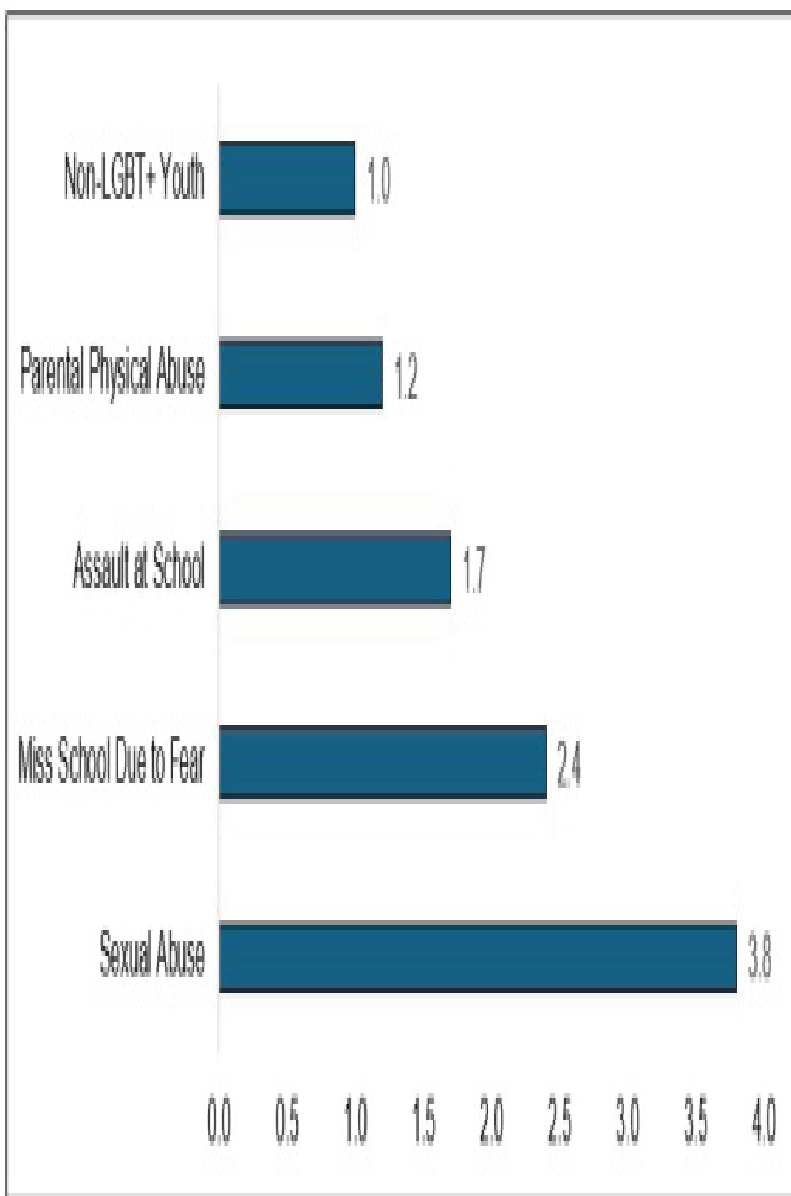


Figure 9.2. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Ratios of Risk Rates for LGBT+ children to Non-LGBT+ Peers, per Friedman, et al., 2011.*

From this data, one begins to see how gender and sexuality further compound the

analysis of trafficking vulnerability. The transgender individuals interviewed in Martin & McKim, 2021 further highlight this issue, as well as the widespread occurrence of “survival sex”⁹ among this population. Drea Catozzi, born biologically a boy, always knew that she was a woman. She was molested early on in her life growing up in an impoverished family, first exchanging sex for money at the age of 17 (reminder: under the TVPA, she is by definition a victim of DMST). Explaining the decision at age 52 she explained simply, “I knew I needed money to pay rent. I knew I needed money to eat. It was just to survive.”

The sexual exploitation of the transgender population is remarkably common. In fact, a 2011 survey found that eleven times more transgender and gender non-conforming persons reported having engaged in sex work for income than cisgender women in the United States (cited in Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls, 2014, p. 31). Key factors leading to such methods of making money were notably “if they had experienced harassment and assault at school, faced bias and harassment at work, had lost a job or experienced homelessness due to bias, had less than a high school education, or were Black or Latino/a.”

Addressing these phenomena is Tre’Andre Valentine, executive director for the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition:

From the [transgender] people that I know personally, most of them have engaged in sex work, *survival sex*¹⁰ work, at some point in their life...it’s not something that is uncommon in our communities (Author’s emphasis added; Martin & McKim, 2021).

Once again, however, the issue of uber-misogynoir appears: the most vulnerable among this particular population are transgender women of color. As Director of Being United in Leading Our Destiny (BUILD) Shaplaie Brooks further explained,

They are the marginalized community within the marginalized community. If you want to change the system for anyone, you need to look at the most depressed person in the room, and that’s the Black trans woman.

Brooks makes an important point that has long gone unnoticed within the modern abolitionist movement. By studying this incredibly marginalized and exploited population, we gain insight into how to address the larger problem and make things better for everyone afflicted. We can see what we’re doing right, and much more importantly, what we’re doing wrong. The LGBT+ population, and the transgender BIPOC population in particular, is the epitome of intersectionality of vulnerabilities. The slightest reduction in social spending priorities hurts the programs that these individuals need to merely survive in a society that marginalizes them to the brink of extinction. Every societal obstacle is magnified for people in these groups. Thus, not only does this population need our support the most (a fact that we cannot overlook in this discussion over what they can teach us) but they also reveal that cuts to social spending in favor of “arrest our way out of this” approaches are doing more harm than good in our efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking (see Bouché & Tipton, 2024).

It is far cheaper, more effective, and more ethical to uplift and empower potential victims before they are ever victimized than it is to rely on prosecutions to deter traffickers (Schwarz & Britton, 2015). Ben Franklin was right, it seems, in regard to that

notion of prevention. This realization is even more evident when one examines the criticisms leveled at the Black Lives Matter movement by activists representing these most maligned populations. In the wake of the protests over the police murder of George Floyd, Black and BIPOC transgender individuals criticized the protest movement because their lives and concerns have been ignored by many LGBT+ activists and racial justice movements alike, as well as by campaigns against human rights abuses and inequality the world over (Leonard, 2021). In short, while Black Lives Matter, there still seems to be a question within the reform movement itself as to whether Black transgender lives matter.

Leonard, 2021 highlights the heightened discrimination by law enforcement mentioned previously. In addition, trans women and girls are so routinely and pervasively removed from discussions and data on human trafficking that such exclusion is practically the default position among anti-trafficking organizations (Leonard, 2021; Martin & McKim, 2021; also, literally all other data sources and citations in this chapter and the next). Such exclusion is the result of societal transphobia and sexism, levels of which are rising, according to available data. However, it is also likely that transgender victimization is dramatically underreported, making accurate estimates unattainable (CBS News, 2023).

Hypersexualization of BIPOC transgender women and girls drives both the sexual exploitation¹¹ and the resulting victim blaming (Tuerkheimer, 2021). As if on cue to further my argument, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' *Report on LGBTQ and HIV-Affected Intimate Partner Violence in 2015* revealed that transgender women were three times more likely to report experiencing sexual and financial violence than their cisgender peers (Leonard, 2021; see also Figs. 9.3, 9.4).

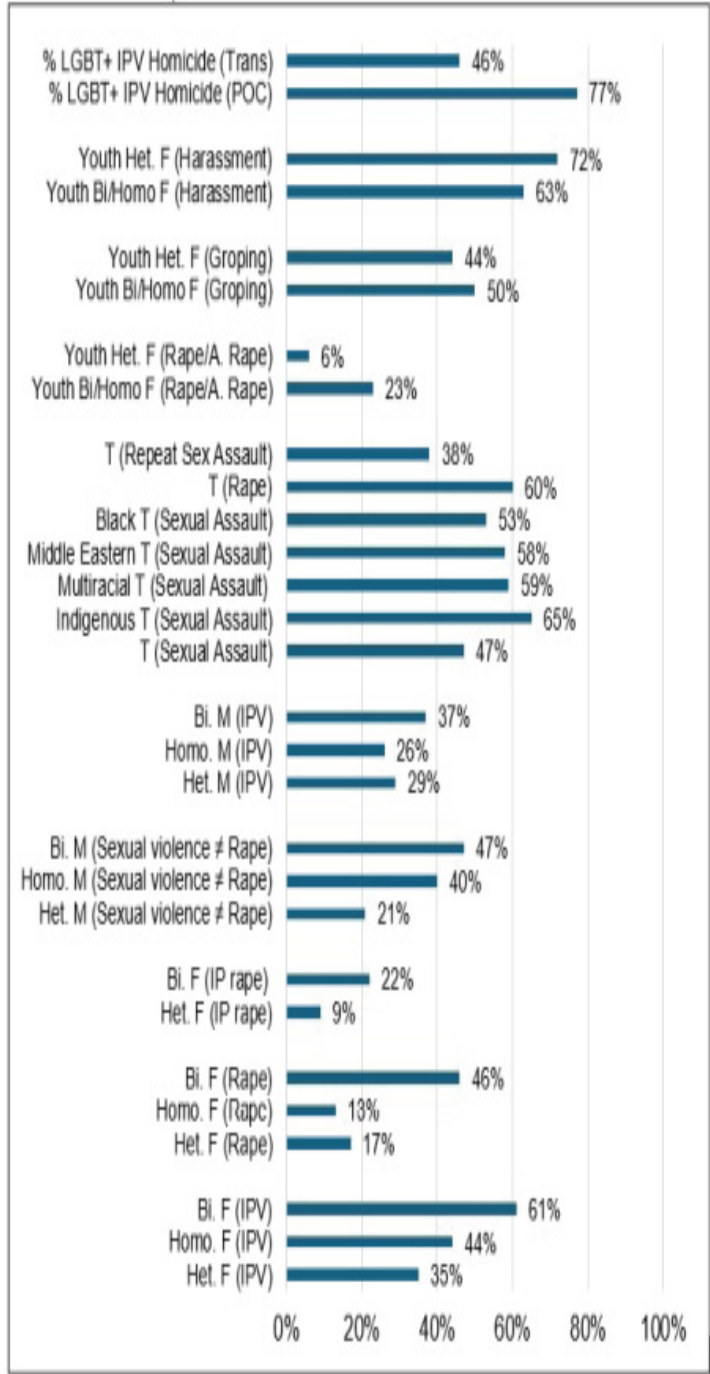


Figure 9.3. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Violence experienced by population group,* using data from BARCC; Human Rights Campaign; NCAVP, 2016.

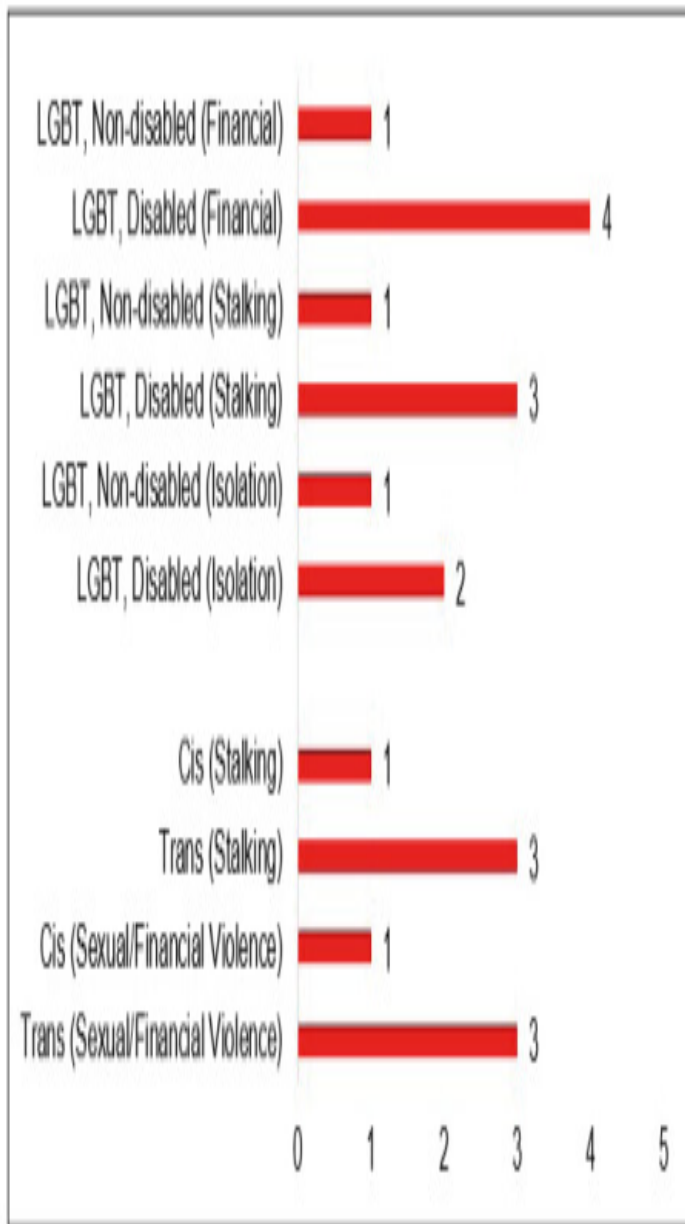


Figure 9.4. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Violence ratings against LGBT+ persons,* using data from BARCC; Human Rights Campaign; NCAVP, 2016.

Additionally, the NCAVP's report illustrated that BIPOC transgender women suffered

from an even higher level of intimate partner violence, including incidents ending in homicide. This trend coincides with the increased levels of transphobic violence seen in recent years: a majority of these victims have been Black and Hispanic (CBS News, 2023; Leonard, 2021; NCVAP, 2016).

Another factor that Leonard, 2021 points to is one that we began this chapter with: the LGBT+ population suffers from grossly disproportionate levels of poverty due to a combination of family ostracization and estrangement, increased discrimination in employment, and far greater criminalization and odds of facing incarceration. In many ways, we've already seen how this happens with LGBT+ persons suffering from greater rates of abuse at the hands of their parents and increased prejudice from law enforcement authorities. Again, this is most visible when one examines the transgender population, due to the numerous ways these individuals are discriminated against and marginalized by American society as a whole. Per the National Center for Transgender Equality, transgender women are more likely than transgender men and those who identify as non-binary to lose their jobs due to their gender identity (cited in Leonard, 2021). Job seekers face such discriminatory hiring processes that they frequently have to weigh the costs and benefits of disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation on their resume (Torres, 2023). And much as women in the workplace face a gender wage gap, there is also a transgender wage gap, with transgender employees making 25% less on average than their cisgender colleagues (Wareham, 2021).

Due to the intense concentration of prejudice that so often leads to financial instability, persons who identify as transgender are naturally more likely to face homelessness and/or engage in the underground economy (Leonard, 2021). Of course, it is not just the transgender population that is affected by these dynamics; that population is simply where it is the most visible to the observer on the outside looking in. The entire LGBT+ population suffer as a result of these psychosocial undercurrents, to the point that approximately 40% of all youth entering homeless shelters in New York City identify as members of this scapegoated population. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2017). This vulnerability is more often than not the result of parental intolerance and abuse, with 54% of these youth reporting that they experienced abuse and/or human trafficking within their family of origin, *and* that this abuse/trafficking was a direct factor in their resulting homelessness. Per the National Coalition for the Homeless, 26% of LGBT+ youth are homeless due to being LGBT+ alone.

These youth are far more likely to experience the more traumatizing unsheltered form of homelessness than their peers as they face harassment, abuse, and even exploitation in shelters. Again, it is critical to remember that homelessness drives many trapped in such desperate situations to engage in survival sex schemes, and that these individuals are, by definition, sex trafficking victims under the TVPA of 2000 (Stop Modern Day Slavery, 2021).¹²

An annual study conducted at Georgia State University provides additional insight into this connection. The Atlanta Youth Count project polled 441 homeless youth in the Atlanta area between the ages of 14 and 25. The results were shocking, but not completely unexpected given what we have examined so far: 56% of the respondents were Black LGBT+ youth, and 54% of the youth surveyed reported experiencing human trafficking of some kind (Wright, et al., 2019). This rate of exploitation while homeless was significantly higher among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth compared to their

heterosexual peers at 44% to 35% respectively. However, the risk was greatest for those youth who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming: a disturbing 71% of this population reported having been trafficked in their lifetime, 64.5% of whom had been trafficked while they were homeless. This is almost twice the rate of their cisgender peers, of whom 34.5% had experienced trafficking.

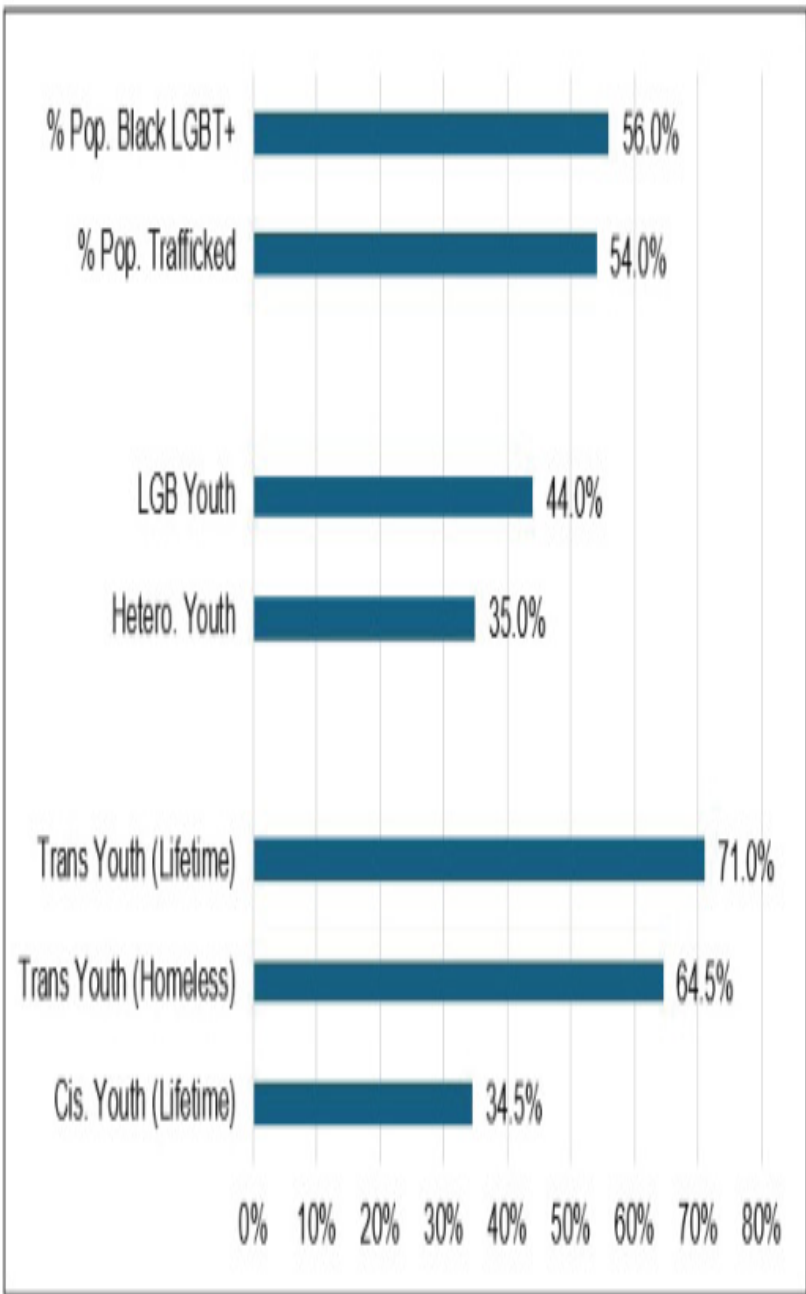


Figure 9.5. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Demographics and trafficking rates of homeless youth 14-25 in Atlanta in 2018, per Wright, et al., 2019.*

In reports to the national human trafficking hotline, victims living in trafficking

situations routinely describe their traffickers as controlling them by exploiting their housing insecurity as well as LGBT+ persons' very human desire to belong and have some sense of family (Polaris, 2018, p. 18). Per Polaris 2018, LGBT+ youth who experience homelessness are between three and seven times more likely to engage in survival sex¹³ than their homeless non-LGBT+ peers. Likewise, homeless LGBT+ youth are 7.4 times more likely to experience acts of sexual violence than their homeless non-LGBT+ peers.

The patterns of exploitation in Atlanta described in Wright et al., 2019 are also clearly visible elsewhere. Housing insecurity – which includes not just homelessness but frequent moving or couch surfing – is a significant problem for the LGBT+ population, which accounts for at least 40% of the homeless youth population in New York City and 20-40% across the country (LoSchiavo, Krause, Singer, & Halkitis, 2020). Martinez & Kelle, 2013 report similar numbers, noting that 20% of homeless youth across the United States are LGBT+, with 58.7% of this population being exploited through prostitution compared to 33.4% of homeless heterosexual youth who are sexually exploited. Per a 2015 study conducted by the Urban Institute, 46% of LGBT+ youth in New York City involved in survival sex¹⁴ adopted the strategy of trading sex for subsistence at the suggestion of a friend who was already in “the life” (Polaris, 2018, p. 18).

Of course, as we have seen, risk has a unique way of compounding upon itself. Young adults who are LGBT+ are about 120% more likely to have experienced homelessness in the previous year than their heteronormative peers; risk for homelessness increases for those who are low-income, persons of color, or who have not completed high school or a GED. LoSchiavo, Krause, Singer, & Halkitis, 2020 caution that these large numbers may, in fact, be gross underestimates. Contributing to this warning is that LGBT+ individuals who experienced *any* form of housing insecurity reported poorer levels of self-rated health, higher levels of depression, and greater gay-related stigma (LoSchiavo, Krause, Singer, & Halkitis, 2020). The authors argued that homelessness and housing instability were a physical result of LGBT-related stigma caused by mental health burdens and social conditions created by familial rejection. Stigma and discrimination likewise lead to poorer mental health, another feedback loop that warrants attention. Multivariate analyses run by the authors also revealed that self-rated health was directly related to housing status, an implication that needs further study as it pertains to both affordable housing and the declining American healthcare system.

Driving this tempest of compounding risk and vulnerability is the way we approach the issue of abuse and trafficking within homes and families. As an example, let's examine Connecticut General Statute §46b-38a(1) (2013) which reads, “*verbal abuse or argument shall not constitute family violence unless there is present danger and the likelihood that physical violence will occur.*”

Anyone familiar with the dynamics of abuse will instantly see the problem with this statute: many forms of abuse are not explicitly criminal. As this problematic statute highlights, often only acts of physical violence can be charged or result in action being taken by law enforcement. In all other circumstances, their “hands are tied,” as the saying goes. This provides a narrow window of intervention in which perpetrators of violence can be arrested and held accountable for their actions. Emotional manipulation, financial abuse (and in some cases fraud), religiously justified abuse, and even some

forms of sexual and physical abuse that leave no physical trace are often un-chargeable unless one considers the acts in the larger context of human trafficking – which law enforcement rarely does.

So why don't we just pass more laws? Why don't we just give the police "the tools they need to do their job?"

That's a fair question that the reader may be asking at this point. The answer is that there's actually a good reason why one doesn't want to give the police or state such power, and it has to do with who already gets trafficked and exploited. However, we have a lot to cover before we can address that more fully.

The Connecticut statute was examined for a reason: there are many ways that a person can be abused and exploited that are not explicitly criminal. Moreover, abuse and criminal activity can be further obfuscated by euphemisms and wordplay, such as by calling ritualized torture and brainwashing "therapy." Such as in the case of so-called conversion "therapy."

I'm using quotes for a reason, and that's because conversion "therapy"

...is not therapy. It's more akin to brainwashing or behavior modification techniques, and it is a practice by anyone who tries to actively get the victim to identify differently in their sexual orientation or gender identity. The more harmful practices and conversations that parents or guardians have with their youth creates more likelihood that division occurs with the family unit.¹⁵

LGBT+ children and youth are often subjected to this abusive treatment at the hands of their parents and/or guardians, leading to alienation within the family. The prioritization of parents' own beliefs over the well-being of their children creates this separation and can drive the child from their home, either forcibly by expulsion (being kicked out) or by being driven to run away. Indeed, in a study at San Francisco State University, the harmful and often brutal nature of conversion therapy led LGBT+ youth to have been eight times more likely to have attempted suicide, six times more likely to have had significantly higher levels of depression, and three times more likely to have used illegal substances. Conversion therapy therefore actually contributes to incredible rates of trafficking vulnerability (Rees, 2022).

The literature on this point is overwhelming. A 2020 analysis revealed that, after adjusting for adverse childhood experiences and demographics, sexual minorities who had been subject to conversion therapy were nearly twice as likely to have experienced suicidal ideation in their lifetime compared to sexual minorities who did not experience conversion therapy (Blosnich, et al., 2020). The former group similarly experienced a 75% increased risk of planning suicide as well as an 88% increase in risk of suicide attempt resulting in "minor injury."

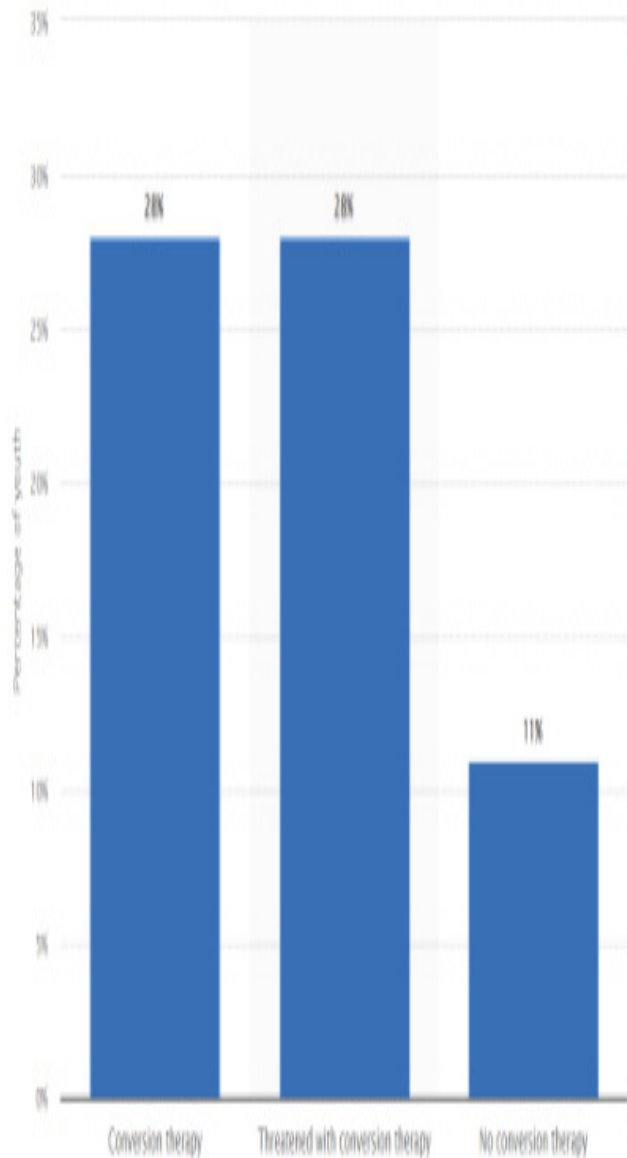


Figure 9.6. (Statista Research Department, 2023) *Percentage of LGBTQ youth in the U.S. who attempted suicide within a 12 month period, ca. 2022..*

This contributes to the reality that LGBT+ youth in general are five times more

likely to die via suicide than non-LGBT+ youth, given their inability to be themselves around family and peers (Rees, 2022). Despite these already disturbing numbers, such treatment has an even more outsized effect on youth who identify as transgender (Turban, Beckwith, Reisner, & Keuroghlian, 2020). This results in higher rates of running away from home and the fact that approximately 92% of all transgender individuals attempt suicide by age 25 (Rees, 2022).

The heinous nature of the victimization of LGBT+ youth in the name of conversion is perhaps best demonstrated by the case of Gary and Meghan Wiggins. The couple operated a religious boys' home called The Joshua Home, which they promoted as a safe haven for troubled boys in Missouri. No one suspected maltreatment of children by the couple who had recently relocated from Alabama. The couple practiced conversion therapy, which, investigators determined, was the couple's euphemism for forced labor. A multi-state and multi-agency investigation resulted in the couple being charged for human trafficking in 2019 (Frias, 2019).

The couple had first operated a similar home in Alabama called Blessed Hope Boys Academy. In 2016, several boys from the home escaped, telling police that they were being tortured with forced exercise, food deprivation, and solitary confinement. Law enforcement raided the home and removed the children from the Wiggins' custody. One of the boys, Lucas Greenfield, later told reporters on 20/20 that "Brother Gary" Wiggins would beat him, saying, "I'm going to get the demon out of you and make you straight." Despite the abundance of evidence, authorities declined to press charges against the couple, enabling them to move to Missouri, establish The Joshua Home, and continue abusing children.

Here's the kicker that allowed the exploitation to occur completely unabated (besides the obvious dereliction in not charging the couple): childcare programs that are operated by religious organizations are exempt from licensure or regulation in the state of Missouri, and so inspections don't occur unless a report of abuse is first filed (Frias, 2019). Investigation into the home in Missouri began after the couple indicated that they planned to move to Texas, causing a Missouri sheriff to tip off Texas law enforcement. The Wiggins' indictment indicates that labor trafficking occurred between May 17 and July 25 of 2018, after which Texas law enforcement raided the couple's Bertram, Texas location and rescued boys who had been trafficked. However, the couple had already attempted to move back to Alabama, where they were arrested a year later by law enforcement. They were subsequently extradited and tried in Texas.

There's a lot to take in with this case. First there is the initial escape from the home in Alabama and the resulting recovery operation, wherein both law enforcement and social services dropped the ball by allowing the Wiggins couple to escape without charge. This allowed them to re-offend, victimizing additional children. There is also the matter of the jurisdictional countermeasures the pair employed, rapidly and repeatedly moving the moment there was any suspicion of wrongdoing directed toward them. They were only brought to justice because authorities from different jurisdictions coordinated efforts. Additionally, there is the issue of religious exemption and legal loopholes that were used to hide abusive practices from detection, revealing the problems with such exclusions. However, there is one particular point that stands out from all the rest, and it's that there's really no difference between traditional, religiously and culturally sanctioned "treatment" of LGBT+ persons and the legal, criminal definitions of child

abuse, forced labor, and human trafficking.

Which is quite an insight all in itself, isn't it?

A Hidden Link: Gender Dysphoria and Autism

There is an additional element at play here that has been touched on but not fully fleshed out, and that is the intersection of LGBT+ identity and disability. As we have seen, LGBT+ persons who suffer from a disability are much more likely to be exploited than their peers who do not have a disability (See Figs. 9.3, 9.4). This is significant given that there is noteworthy overlap between LGBT+ persons and individuals diagnosed with autism: that is, there seems to be a link between gender diversity, sexual diversity, and neurodiversity.

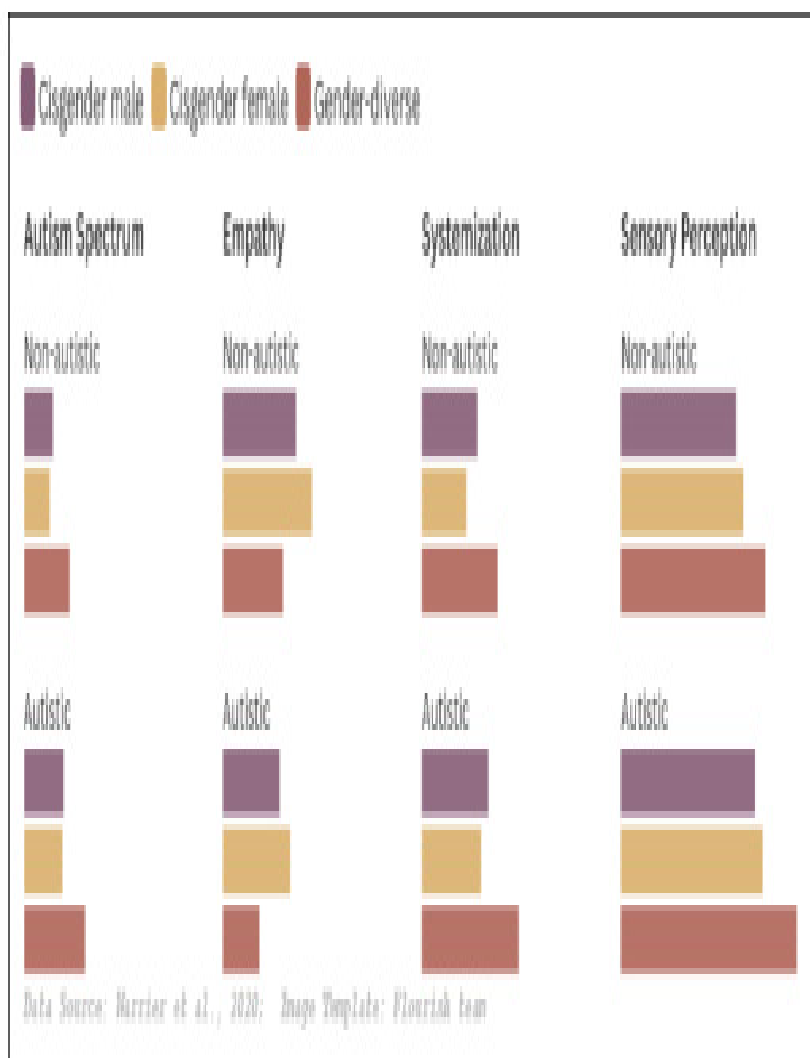


Figure 9.7. (Warrier et al., 2020) *Gender identity and autistic traits.* This study showed that gender-diverse people scored lower on empathy but higher on autism traits than did cisgender people.

A 2020 meta-analysis highlighted this surprising relationship. In the largest study of

its kind, Warrier et al., 2020) took data from five separate, unrelated databases with information pertaining to autism, gender, and mental health, and found stark differences among populations. Approximately 5% of all cisgender persons in the study were found to have autism, while a remarkable 24% of those who identified as gender-diverse did (Warrier, et al., 2020). In short, autistic people are more likely to express gender diversity, and gender-diverse persons are more likely to have autism. A later meta-analysis found that children who experience **gender dysphoria** (the sense of distress that transgender and non-binary persons feel living in a body that has been assigned a gender by others that does not conform to their own lived gender experience) are in fact 400% more likely to be diagnosed with autism (Kallitsounaki & Williams, 2023). Indeed, 5.7% of autistic children struggle with the concept of gender identity (Elfer, 2022). If we stop and think about it, this makes an awful lot of sense: modern binary concepts of gender are arbitrary social constructs.¹⁶ Individuals with autism, of course, have trouble with understanding social concepts and behavior, so of course they would have trouble understanding why such an open-ended spectrum of possibilities is so artificially and narrowly restricted to two “choices” (see also Glidden, Bourman, Jones, & Arcelus, 2016; Cooper, Mandy, Russell, & Butler, 2022).

From a purely academic perspective, this is fascinating, and the area is ripe for future research, particularly in the field of neuroscience (see Caselles, 2021; Mueller, et al., 2021; Roselli, 2018; Kranz, et al., 2014; and Flint, et al., 2020).¹⁷ However, there are those who caution against overstating the strength of the relationship between gender diversity and neurodiversity, and they have a point which I’ve raised already: linking gender diversity, gender dysphoria, and autism can lead to increased discrimination and maltreatment (Saleh, 2023). Figures 9.3 and 9.4 seem to suggest this happens enough on its own already.

Along this line, Dr. Naveed Saleh presents an interesting argument. Writing for VeryWellHealth.com, Dr. Saleh cited the keynote address given by Natacha Kennedy at the 2012 meeting of the British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section (POWS) where she stated that delineating a causal relationship between autism and gender dysphoria is a form of cisgender discrimination. The problem, it must be understood, is cultural. Cultural notions of gender cause an observer biased by that culture to characterize another individual with gendered notions without the consent or input of the individual being gendered. Think about when one looks at a newborn: one assigns – imposes even – a gender onto that newborn without the newborn’s knowledge, consent, or input.¹⁸ As the newborn grows, the child is made to automatically fulfill the role and norms that were imposed upon it by others, and in which it had no choice. Children who disagree with these roles, norms, or decisions that were hefted upon them without their consent (transgender and non-binary persons) are then declared abnormal by peers, family, and even the medical establishment which diagnoses them (gender dysphoria) and treats them (gender-affirming care). Because of the surrounding cultural bias, this entire process is assumed to exist on a binary (either male or female, not option C), essential, unchangeable, and absolutely not fluid or existing on a spectrum at all.

Here’s the thing: this cisgenderism is experienced by all of us residing in the cultural system (Saleh, 2023). In fact, we experience it so much that we don’t even talk about it; we just accept it. After all, such big words certainly weren’t in our third-grade textbooks provided to us by the state of Texas. We just automatically attribute the pronoun *he* to

discern the true relationship between gender diversity and autism.

This topic also reveals a bit about larger society in that a fair amount of transphobia is also ableism, and this dual discrimination, as per the case of misogynoir, can be deadly. This issue also highlights how norms, and societal pressures to conform to those norms, hamper diversity of expression and even neurodiversity, in turn limiting diversity of thought and humanity's creative potential. The ultimate cost of slavery thus becomes clear: we are depriving ourselves of some of the most original thinkers – and thus potential solutions to our problems – by trapping them in never-ending cycles of abuse, trauma, and trafficking, or pushing them toward an early grave through a lack of social acceptance or poor health via impoverishment. Again, we find that, at a societal level, populations that are perceived as benefiting from inequality and slavery are, in fact, slowly killing themselves by keeping trafficking around through the implementation of “drained-pool” policies (Klibanoff, 2023; Bugos, 2023; see also Metzl 2020; McGhee, 2021; Graetz, et al., 2024).

Interestingly, the connection to autism isn't unique to transgender and/or gender-diverse persons, but is present among the entire LGBT+ community. Per research published by The Trevor Project, over 5% of LGBT+ youth have been diagnosed with autism, with an additional 35% suspecting they are autistic, compared to a mere 2.8% of all U.S. youth who have been affirmatively diagnosed with the condition (The Trevor Project, 2022; CDC Newsroom, 2023). Per the CDC, autism is approximately four times as common in boys as it is in girls. This pattern seems to carry over into the LGBT+ population as it pertains to cisgender persons, with LGB cisgender girls/women reporting the lowest rates of autism diagnosis (3%), approximately three times lower than that of cisgender LGB boys/men. However, as shown in Figure 9.8, the Trevor Project's data provides better insight as to how the diagnosis varies across populations, including gender-diverse populations that were assigned male at birth (AMAB) or assigned female at birth (AFAB).

The study also reveals long-term implications for these individuals' physical and mental health. The study showed that LGBT+ youth who had been diagnosed with autism had over 50% greater likelihood of attempting suicide in the prior year compared to those who had not been so diagnosed (The Trevor Project, 2022). A similar pattern was observed among youth who were autistic or suspected they were, with such persons having a statistically significant greater chance of having considered suicide in the past year. To further drive home the point, youth who had been diagnosed with autism or suspected they had autism demonstrated the highest rates of depression and anxiety. Additionally, race and ethnicity appear to be strong factors among the expression of autistic characteristics in LGBT+ persons (see Fig. 9.10). This could be a contributing factor to the increased homelessness and exploitation of these populations, but this potential connection has yet to be studied.²⁰ Moreover, given this high rate of neurodivergence among LGBT+ and the vast overrepresentation of LGBT+ persons among trafficked populations, as well as the high rate of mental health issues among the trafficked, future inquiries into the mental health of trafficking victims are needed to explore the rates of neurodiverse diagnoses and their potential role in predisposing individuals to exploitation.

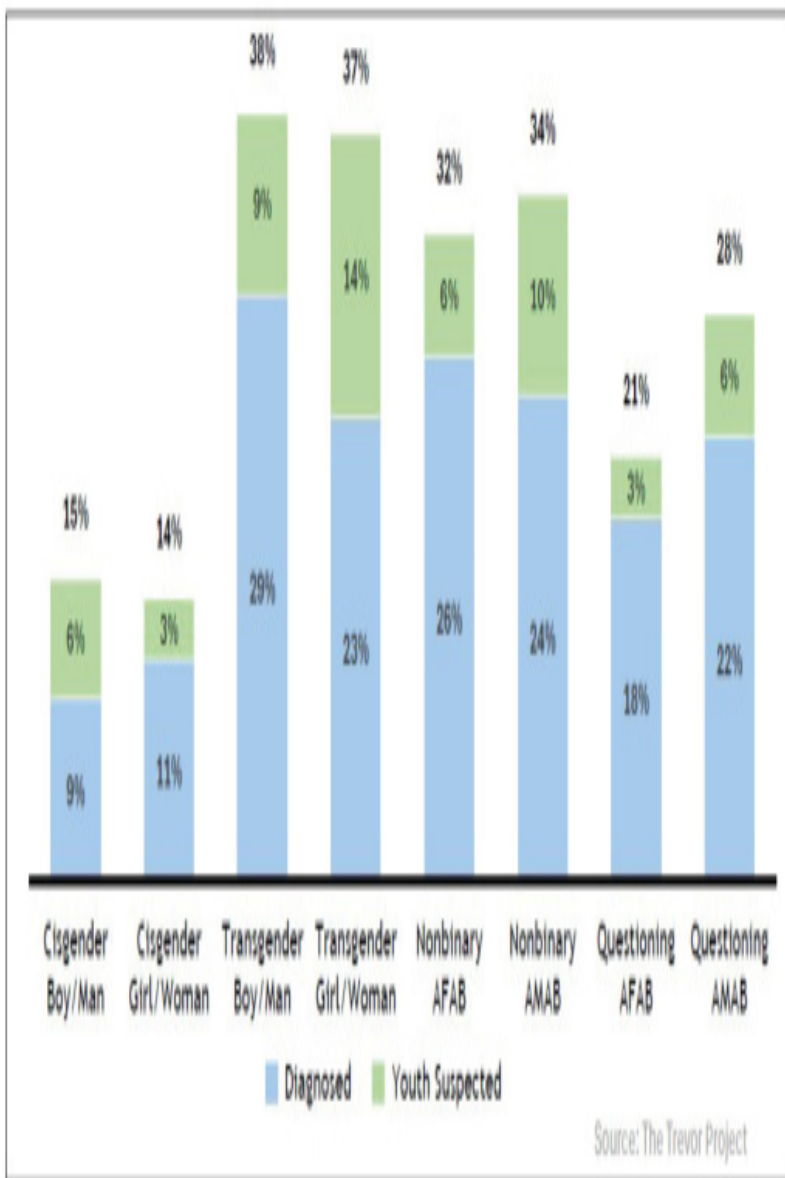


Figure 9.8. Percentage of LGBT+ youth in the Trevor Project study who reported an autism spectrum disorder.

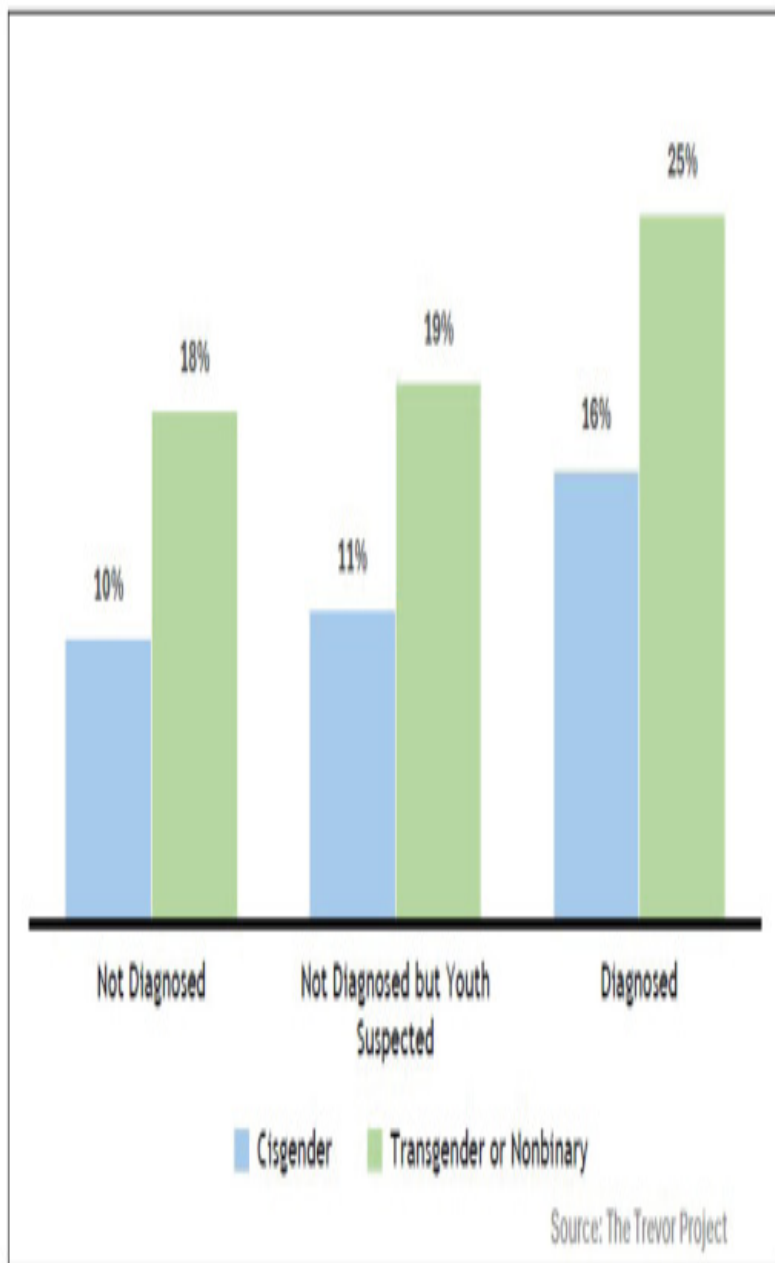


Figure 9.9. *Percentage of LGBT+ youth who attempted suicide in a 12-month period, by autism spectrum disorder suspicion or diagnosis.*

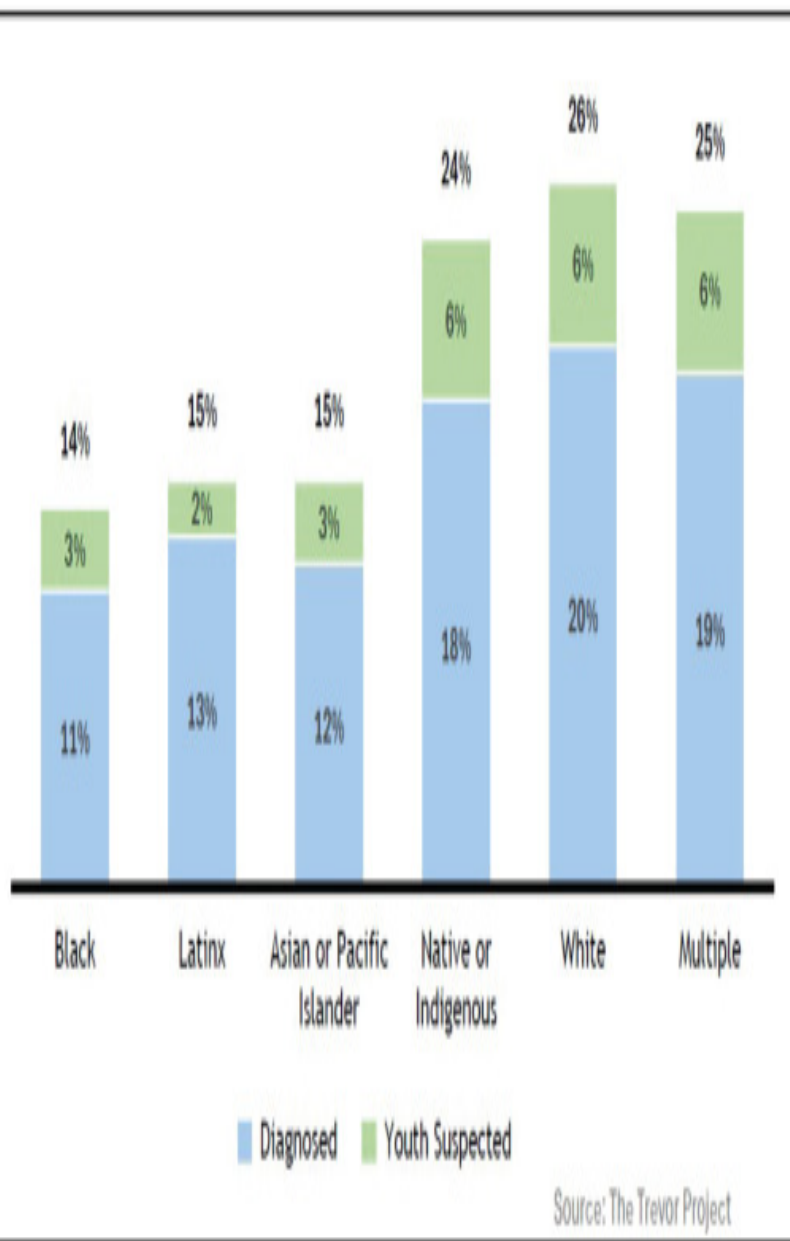


Figure 9.10. *Percentage of LGBT+ youth, by race/ethnicity, who reported an autism spectrum disorder.*

Willful Ignorance

The question must surely be asked: how did we miss these connections? Again, our innate biases attenuate the focus we give to marginalized populations. And the more marginalized the community, the less attention we give to the issues affecting that community, including issues of violence, rape, and even murder. It's Missing White Woman Syndrome all over again: the lives of transgender women are judged as having intrinsically less value than cisgender women, and BIPOC transgender women are judged to have even less value than white transgender women. Human lives, it is quite clear, are evaluated by society on a sliding scale: the more marginalized they are, the more vulnerabilities to human trafficking they will experience, as their life is determined to mean less than those who are not as marginalized.

Our media is also complicit in this, as demonstrated by disparities in their coverage across these populations. As an example, in 2012 two women vanished around the same time in Virginia: Sage Smith, 19, and Heather Hodges, 22. Mainstream media attention was exclusively focused on Hodges' case. The only outlets that discussed Smith's disappearance were GLAAD, *The Advocate*, and a handful of other LGBT+ friendly media outlets. Hodges, of course, was a White cisgender woman, whereas Smith was Black and transgender (Ennis, 2015).

Similarly, in December of 2014 Leelah Alcorn, a White, 17-year-old transgender girl committed suicide, attracting national media attention for several months long into the next year. A few months later in March, 2015, Blake Brockington also committed suicide. Brockington was homecoming king and a well-known teen activist, yet his death garnered almost no attention, even from within the LGBT+ community (Ennis, 2015). Brockington, of course, was a Black transgender young man (see also Fig. 5.5).

Public discussions of transgender issues seem to carefully tiptoe around the obscene levels of violence this community faces, in favor of more viewer-friendly topics that garner ratings. To this point, a study of news reporting of transgender issues in 2015 revealed three major topics: Caitlyn Jenner's transition, imprisoned former U.S. Army Private and traitor Chelsea Manning, and the aforementioned tragic case of Leelah Alcorn (Maza, López, & Percelay, 2015; Glaser, 2018). All three women were White. Yet, when it came to the murders of *at least* eight transgender women in the United States in the first six months of the year, the silence was simply deafening, not to mention the twelve transgender women killed in the U.S. in the prior year. If one adds in murders of transgender persons across the world, including four in merely one week in May of 2015, as well as the vast numbers of transgender suicides caused by reasons we have already discussed, one suddenly realizes why this community so often speaks of an "epidemic of violence" against them and a "transgender genocide" (Ennis, 2015). Rampant, systemic and systematic exploitation is often a means to larger goals of extermination (Gruner, 2008; see also Unknown, 2007; Wollheim Memorial).

One conclusion is clear: the mainstream media is utterly complicit in human trafficking, as many conspiracists claim – just not in the way they claim (Vaughn, 2023; Foot, 2024; Farrow, 2019).²¹ The problem is also rapidly accelerating. In 2021, 56 transgender people were murdered compared to the twelve assassinated in 2014 (a 467% increase). Data from Everytown for Gun Safety confirms this increase in violence rates against transgendered persons, with the rate nearly doubling from 2017 to 2021 alone—an increase of 93% (CBS News, 2023; Ennis, 2015).

Even more disturbing is the complicity and active contribution of anti-trafficking and child safety experts to this rising violence. When a person's "advocacy" targets vulnerable children, forces families to flee their homes (and even their state), and contributes to growing suicide rates, then that person is in no way a hero. Another person's mere existence cannot violate one's deeply held "beliefs." If it does, then that's not so much a belief as much as it is a matter of simple, old-fashioned bigotry. Such an "advocate" would, in fact, be an incarnation of the very risk factors we have described. Indeed, after nearly two decades in this fight, I am hard-pressed not to conclude that the fiercest advocates and the loudest voices are often the ones inflicting the most harm upon those they claim to be protecting. From such a vantage point, it seems as though the modern abolitionist front is the absolute last group that should be leading the charge on this issue of eradicating slavery. In fact, from this examination, it appears that we didn't "miss" anything regarding the exploitation of the LGBT+ population. Instead, we simply ignored it. Make no mistake: *We are killing the very people we claim to be wanting to help.*

¹ The transgender population is particularly hard to estimate; see Chalabi, 2014.

² This is not the author needlessly opining as to the root of the problem, but rather what the scholarly literature on the subject overwhelmingly shows. In fact, I am being careful to reword things just enough to avoid accusations of plagiarism while still attempting to reflect the original content of the sources cited.

³ Xian, Chock, & Swiggins, 2017.

⁴ Quoted in Pesta, 2022.

⁵ The power dynamics of the significant age difference must be noted here. This is a common way that victims are exploited: by an older, more experienced predator. Consider "daddy/daughter" relationships.

⁶ Again, *there is no such thing as a child prostitute.*

⁷ See Chapter 5, footnotes 16 and 17.

⁸ Quoted in Vega, 2019.

⁹ Sex trafficking.

¹⁰ Again, this is sex trafficking.

¹¹ Refer back to the discussions of the high rate of sex trafficking that the transgender community experiences: *who do you think is buying them?*

¹² While the numbers are particularly high among homeless women, youth, and LGBT+ persons, this phenomenon also affects homeless, heterosexual, cisgender men at high rates. Poverty is the biggest pimp.

¹³ Sex trafficking.

¹⁴ Sex trafficking.

¹⁵ D. Smith, quoted in Rees, 2022.

¹⁶ For those confused with this issue, please consult Elsesser, 2020; Caselles, 2021; Mueller, et al., 2021; Roselli, 2018; Kranz, et al., 2014; and Flint, et al., 2020 before screaming about what you learned in third grade.

¹⁷ This connection first caught the author's attention during his tenure at the CIA. Unfortunately, due to the context in which it arose and the Agency's strict non-disclosure policies, he is prohibited from discussing it further. Fortunately, someone else encountered the same information and merely had to obtain DoD approval to publish it, which they did (see Elizondo, 2024; pp. 136-138; See also TunNonno, 2025; Remote Viewing Practice, 2020; Danielbearh, 2025; Dickens, 2025; LudditeHorse, 2025. There is also a significant connection between traumatic experience and the phenomena in question [Clickclack_io, 2025; BR4NNFRY3, 2025]). It is the author's opinion that this revelation is what much of this oppression has been aimed at suppressing, from biblical times to the present (Stewartson, 2024h; Stewartson, 2024i). As demonstrated, many people hold strange beliefs about autistic individuals, especially autistic children – making them prime targets for medical experimentation (NeuroLaunch Editorial Team, 2024).

¹⁸ Monty Python was right. (Monty Python, 2008.)

¹⁹ “One of the big issues that we have heard today and we’ve talked about lately is that without surgery the risk of suicide goes way up. Well, I am one of those parents who lived with a daughter who was suicidal for three years. Someone once asked me, ‘Wouldn’t I just do anything to help save her?’ And I really had to think and the answer was, ‘No.’ I was not going to give in to her emotional manipulation because she was incapable of making those decisions and I had to make those decisions for her. I was not going to let her tear apart my family and I was not going to let her tear apart me because I had to be strong for her, I had to have a vision for her life when she had none, was incapable of having none.” – Kerri Seekins-Crowe, R-MT. Quoted in Shabad, 2023.

²⁰ Y’all should know by now how to take a hint.

²¹ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 3(e) Dec. 9, 1948, S. Exec. Doc. See also Heisler, 2023; Roth & Huff, 2023; Kendzior, 2023a; Anonymous BBC Journalist, 2024; Schumann, 2024; Khouri, 2023; Johnson, 2023; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; MacLeod, 2019; Otto, 2023; Zhang, 2024; Karakatsanis, 2023; Tomansky, 2024; Stewartson, 2024c; Media Page Editors, 2024; Mustafa, 2024; Al Jazeera Staff, 2024; MacLeod, 2024.

Chapter 10

The “Groomer” Panic and Other Case Studies in DARVO

“One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we’ve been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We’re no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It’s simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we’ve been taken. Once you give a charlatan power over you, you almost never get it back.”

– Carl Sagan

“Follow the money.”

– **Deep Throat**, *All the President's Men*

“I will never support the narrative that Hamas is responsible for every casualty in Gaza. That’s an abuser’s logic. Israel has agency and morality, and that requires doing more than saying ‘look what you made me do’ while children are bombed.”

– **Dr. Mia Brett**

“Once you realize most people don’t really want collective liberation but rather book and film deals, bylines, money, clout or straight up want to be the oppressor... it all makes sense.”

– **Saira Rao**

As we have seen in our examination so far, psychology plays a critical role in the dynamics of human trafficking. Indeed, this dynamic is not limited to the perpetrator-victim relationship, but extends to the outsider looking into the world of trafficking. As previously pointed out, *perception is reality*, and what one believes to be the truth is often more impactful than what the facts or the truth really are. Thus, it stands to reason that perpetrators of all kinds attempt to shift perceptions and realities about their actions and behaviors to better mask their activities and avoid accountability for their crimes.

A Defense Mechanism Gone Awry

Enter **DARVO**, which stands for (D)eny, (A)ttack, (R)everse (V)ictim and (O)ffender. Understanding DARVO is essential to understanding human trafficking, child sexual abuse, and all forms of slavery, exploitation, corruption, and coercion. Once one understands this concept and how it is deployed to shift attention away from predatory behavior, all the remaining pieces of the puzzle simply fall into place. It is therefore worth investing some time to examine this. Much like human trafficking, after one understands the principles of DARVO, one will simply see it everywhere: from the everyday interactions one may have with family members, coworkers, bosses, customers, and clients to identifying instances of force, fraud, coercion or abusive relationships, to the constant lies that we are bombarded with by political pundits and heads of state. DARVO is simply everywhere and is critical to understand – especially in a post-truth world.

Key to this pattern of behavior is another psychological behavior known as projection. **Projection**, as explained by Dr. Timothy Yen, is, “seeing something unconsciously experienced inside and placing it on someone else. In some cases, projection can be something that bothers the individual about him or herself, but they may be unable or unwilling to deal with the issue” (Gillette, 2021). As one might guess, projection is a useful mechanism for resolving cognitive dissonance.

Suppose a hypothetical person has a strong moral belief, as many do, that one should be loyal to their spouse; this includes remaining sexually exclusive. However, this individual also has a penchant for maintaining multiple sexual partners. The disconnect between the person’s internal beliefs and their actions would likely generate a great deal of (albeit entirely unconscious) cognitive dissonance, which might boil over into the classical example of a spouse who is having an affair but accuses their partner of having the affair instead (Beauman, 2017). Something that the cheating spouse has experienced unconsciously on the inside, within their own mind, has now been externalized and placed upon someone *else* as a trait of that person, all because the cheating spouse is unwilling to confront the disconnect between their belief and their behavior. In this way, one can see the beginnings of DARVO taking shape. As another example, consider the schoolyard bully who ridicules and berates his schoolmates about their perceived insecurities and shortcomings: such an individual is likely dealing with his own struggle with low self-esteem, unhealthily projecting his internal issue onto others instead of confronting it head-on. As many of us are all too aware, many bullies never really grow out of this pattern of behavior.

There are many ways in which human beings project subconscious attributes of themselves onto other individuals, for their own ego is simply that great. The examples we’ve examined so far constitute what is referred to as **neurotic projection**, which consists of assigning undesirable feelings or emotions to another as a means to distance or displace oneself from experiencing them. Neurotic projection plays a significant role in victim blaming and the failure to hold criminals accountable for their crimes, be they human trafficking, sex crimes, or other forms of victimization. Think about the following statements: “he made me do it; she was asking for it; she made me feel that way; they were leading me on.” From these statements, one can see the fundamental role that neurotic projection plays in who is assigned blame (Tuerkheimer, 2021).

Then there is **complementary projection**. Complementary projection is even more common than neurotic projection and occurs when a person assumes that others share the same beliefs and experiences that they do. For example, we all tend to believe that others perceive color the same way that we individually do – we just assume that we all have the same perception of “red” or “blue.” In this way, we are projecting our own perceptions onto others, which can cause problems if a person is colorblind, for instance (Beauman, 2017). This can become problematic because we often complementarily project our own value systems onto others; when we find that others don’t believe the same as we do, conflict ensues. Have you ever told an “inside joke,” only to find the other person didn’t laugh, or worse, was offended? Has someone ever told you an offensive joke only to be surprised that you didn’t laugh? This is a consequence of complementary projection.

Finally, there is **complimentary projection**, which occurs when one assumes others have the same level of ability that one does (Gillette, 2021). Consider the skilled chef

who expects the newcomer to bake a soufflé with the same level of ease, or a worker who expects the new hire to be able to keep up with them on the shift. As one can clearly see, we humans project our inner fears and desires all over each other to the point that it's hard to tell where one of us begins and another ends.

This begs an obvious question: why do we do these things?

There are several reasons. A big part of the problem stems from the mind-brain interface: we are neurologically naturally hard-wired to be defensive. When we are confronted or otherwise challenged, our mind triggers the same emotions that get activated when we physically have to defend ourselves, and so cognitively we behave as if we are in a state of danger. This in turn can trigger the brain's fight, flight, or freeze mechanism (MyTherapist Editorial Team, 2023). This reaction is reinforced by other psychological self-defense and coping mechanisms. For starters, deep down at a subconscious level, we really want everyone to like us, and it hurts our fragile little egos when someone does not, so we try to justify it as not really being our fault. Once again, it all comes down to our sense of ego.

We additionally associate being wrong with our sense of pride: if we admit we are wrong, this hurts our sense of self-esteem and might mean that others really don't really like us. Strike two for that ego of ours. This is why so many refuse to admit they made a mistake even when it's plainly obvious. Making things even worse is the problem of oversimplified, black-and-white concepts of right and wrong: most people see themselves as the "hero" of their life story. Again, it's an ego and self-esteem issue. If Frodo/Luke Skywalker/Superman has a serious personality flaw or even admits that they were wrong, then suddenly they're no longer the hero, but the villain. Everyone wants to associate their identity with being "good," whatever that means – being strong, being loved, being *perfect* – and when we fall short of that, we'll jump through all sorts of hoops to avoid admitting it. In fact, these internal dynamics are so strong that attempts to deflect or project negative emotions and/or actions onto another is a *criminologically significant indication of guilt* (Kreutz, 2023).

DARVO is just a natural extension of this. First identified as a dynamic of sexual predators, DARVO can be observed in all forms of abusive relationships or relationships in which there is an unequal balance of power, including the trafficker-victim dynamic. Dr. Jennifer Freyd, who first described the phenomenon, has stated that people are statistically much less likely to accept a DARVO response from an abuser once they understand the dynamics of this role reversal (Scott, 2020). However, it merits additional discussion for another reason that will soon become obvious: DARVO is also known as an "accusation in a mirror," and has been cited extensively as an indirect or "cloaked" means of incitement to genocide (Benesch, 2008; Benesch, 2014).

Denial is the first step of this process. This is the "I did not have sexual relations with that woman" phase of the DARVO process. The individual being held to account vehemently denies what has happened. This often involves the individual **gaslighting** the survivors of their abuse or misconduct, which involves attempting to sow confusion or self-doubt in the survivor or the public's mind to make them doubt their memory of factual events (Kippert, 2022). Minimization of the events in question tend to accompany this step, with the perpetrator claiming, "it wasn't that bad" or "everyone does that." Claims that the victim is misremembering the event will cause the victim and those around them to question whether they are "blowing things out of proportion,"

sometimes causing the issue to be dropped before the next stage is even reached.

If the denial alone is not enough, the perpetrator will move on to attack the victim. Specifically, the victim's credibility will be targeted, raising questions as to whether others, including law enforcement and the media, should focus on the victim as the talking point rather than the events in question. The survivor's mental health will be raised: they might have a history of depression, anxiety, or substance dependency, or it might be claimed that they are seeking attention. In rape cases, it's common for the rapist to claim that their victim was "leading them on" or was "asking for it" and that they fully consented to sexual intercourse. In cases of marital rape, the rapist will often claim that because the victim is married to them, that they couldn't sexually assault them. In instances of domestic violence, the abuser frequently asserts that the abused partner is really the abuser, and that they were only acting to defend themselves. This all has a dramatic silencing effect on the actual victim: such actions further bully an already traumatized victim who is now struggling with notions of trauma-related guilt, that is, the idea that what happened to them was somehow justified or was really their own fault (Kippert, 2022; Harsey, Zurbruggen, & Freyd, 2017).

Then comes the final step: the reversing of the status of victim and offender. The perpetrator of the offense against the victim might claim that the victim has a hidden agenda in leveling the accusation against them: that they want attention, that they want to turn people against them, receive a larger divorce settlement, or take away their children. The perpetrator will thus present themselves as a "victim of the system," especially if the matter is a criminal one, and might invoke their race, gender, or socioeconomic status to reinforce their claim. This creates a situation in which the survivor spends more time defending their reputation – something completely irrelevant to the events and behavior in question – than receiving help for the assault, all while the disclosure of abuse that they suffered is overshadowed by facts not pertinent to the investigation (Harsey & Freyd, 2020).

DARVO isn't unique to sexual abuse or intimate partner relationships – it can occur in the workplace, or in open society.¹ In the workplace for instance, a superior might invite a junior employee to a meeting and when the employee follows up on the invitation, the boss might respond, "we never talked about that" (Kippert, 2022). Make no mistake, the boss didn't simply forget. Rather, this behavior is perfectly intentional: it's a way for the boss to gaslight the junior employee in an egotistical drive to feel superior. In order to do so, such people *have* to tear down the self-esteem of others. This behavior stems from severe insecurity. Abusers are typically insecure individuals who feel threatened by those who are recognized as successful, are well-liked, or simply viewed as competent. Thus, they project their insecurity onto others much like a schoolyard bully. Again, this sequence of events is a criminological indicator that the accused is in fact guilty of what they are attempting to now blame others for (Kreutz, 2023).

Such abusive individuals tend to create a great deal of drama, spreading lies and rumors, all in order to pit a group of people in a coordinated way against a particular individual. Abusive, manipulative people often are highly narcissistic in nature, preferring to create a mask, a façade, of who they really are. They pretend to be an innocent victim who would never harm a fly, even when they are, in fact, a violent, raging, abusive, self-centered, and judgmental jerk.² Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's

Psycho is a perfect example of this. Such people have a strong compulsion to protect a false sense of self that they create for themselves and others. Again, it is important to remember that these individuals are very insecure, but this insecurity is hidden deep in the unconscious behind many layers of defense mechanisms; one will never break down all the walls to get them to face this reality due to their overwhelming sense of ego. Thus, if anyone anywhere says or does anything that contradicts this self-image, they react violently, lashing out in a fit of rage to protect this delusion of themselves, as it's the only thing that allows them to look at themselves in the mirror.³

Let's consider an example.⁴ Hypothetically, let's assume that someone, anyone – feel free to choose your own adventure here, but for the record I am imaging a writer of certain magical, widely-read children's literature – is accused of transphobia. This will result in the accused not engaging in any introspection to see if they are, in fact, transphobic. The actual logical and factual merit of the claim, at a cognitive level, doesn't matter. Again, as we've discussed, introspection is hard, and it's just cognitively much easier to deny things and throw it back at the person doing the accusing than to do any actual soul-searching and attempt any self-improvement. Rather, they will instead *deny* the accusation, perhaps by proclaiming “I'm not transphobic! I love trans people! I have a trans friend!”

From here, they will move on to *attack* their critics. This will resemble something along the lines of, “people who are saying that I'm transphobic are just spiteful, cruel, hateful people who want to cause division. I love everyone equally – in fact, I'm genderblind.” Lastly, they will move on to *reverse victim and offender*, painting themselves as the victim, of course: “I'm receiving SO much abuse and vitriol online because I'm a woman and we live in a sexist society.”

Do you see what's happened? Suddenly instead of holding someone accountable for an offense (who, realistically speaking, isn't used to being held accountable) you're suddenly the perpetrator of an offense against them. As a critic, you're between a rock and a hard place, you sexist pig, you. If you keep trying to hold that person accountable, you're “spiteful, cruel, and hateful” in your quest to sow division in your otherwise peaceful community. Can't we all just get along? An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind, after all. You're the one who's piling on. Let it go, man. Quit cancelling her. After all, it's not as if she's engaging in Holocaust denial, for Christ's sake: she's merely contending that particularly well-documented Nazi atrocities were simply imagined as part of some fantastical fever dream. That's *hardly* the same thing, and she'll sue anyone who claims otherwise.⁵

And so, you let it go. And the person gets to re-offend again. And again.

And the cycle repeats itself, with nothing ever changing. The status quo remains the status quo, because other victims have seen, through your example, that if they speak up about something that's happened to them, their own experiences will also be denied, they'll be attacked, and will be victim-blamed (Scott, 2020).

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

The Politics of Distraction

This example is particularly relevant to a disturbing trend in the anti-trafficking and child safety communities. Full appreciation of the trend, however, requires some

historical context.

During the critical 1952 elections that would return both houses of Congress and the White House to the Republican Party for the first time since the Great Depression, the Republican Party decided that it would be politically advantageous to connect potentially homosexual employees at the State Department to the threat of Communism – a talking point that Sen. Joe McCarthy would expound upon for the rest of the decade in his paranoid grandstanding (Kirchick, 2022). J. Edgar Hoover, then-director of the FBI, spread the rumor that the Democratic nominee, divorcee Adlai Stevenson, was gay, in an effort to support the Republican platform.⁶ Sexual deviancy had become equated to political deviancy during World War II and the years following, and deviants and Communists were believed to be one and the same (Hope, 2022). Approximately three months after taking office, Dwight Eisenhower fulfilled his campaign pledge by signing Executive Order 10450, prohibiting those who practiced “sexual perversion,” i.e., those who were gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc., from working in the federal government or for federal contractors. It wasn’t until 1975 that the ban was lifted in the civil services, and it took the enactment of “don’t ask, don’t tell” by President Bill Clinton for the “lavender lads” to obtain security clearances.

Thousands of qualified civil servants lost their jobs. More than one committed suicide. Untold numbers of brilliant, qualified, and civically minded citizens refrained from entering the civil and military service due to the irrational, paranoid horror that homosexuality inspired in the hearts and minds of the American public. Moreover, public perception was poisoned, distorting reality and unnecessarily dividing the nation through a moral panic, the “Lavender Scare” (Kirchick, 2022). Compelled now more than ever to live their lives in secret, the LGBT+ community suddenly found themselves at the center of all manners of conspiracy theories, social anxieties, and political agendas. For decades, religious leaders and anti-LGBT+ moral crusaders such as Anita Bryant accused LGBT+ persons of molesting children and supporting – if not outright *being* – child predators, all in order to demonize and marginalize the community (Center for Extremism, 2022). Essential to this paranoia is that LGBT+ people, because they have to live their lives in secret (ignoring the fact that the reason they have to do so are the very bigots spouting their paranoid drivel in the first place), operate through subterfuge, secrecy, and tradecraft – hence the origins of the notion of a “gay mafia” (BBC, 1998).

In the continuing aftermath of this Republican-driven panic in the 1950s through to the early 2000s, a sort of “gay panic” took hold which correlated strongly with the factors behind the Satanic Panic. Claims quickly spread that “the gays” were recruiting in schools, or that they were “indoctrinating children” into being gay, as children were simply “too young to know” about that “sort of thing.” After all, it “surely wasn’t natural.” It’s not as if homosexuality occurs in thousands of other species – it’s just “a phase, something that children grow out of and will, eventually, regret.” As one might guess from the original anti-gay talking points and the more recent, anti-trans talking points that have dominated in recent years, moral panics tend to recycle a lot of old garbage.

Fast forward to 2021, when fear of human trafficking was at a fever pitch following the Epstein revelations, the spread of QAnon, and the general fear and loathing that accompanied the horror of a global pandemic which was itself both the source and the

target of much mis- and disinformation. Suddenly, “the gays” were no longer “recruiting” or “indoctrinating” children with their, I guess, gay-ness, but rather it was the evil, maniacal transgenders who were now “grooming” children, as per conservative pundit (and NXIVM best buddy; see Zarnowski, 2023) James Lindsey and Chaya Raichik, the personality behind the Twitter account LibsOfTikTok. It wasn’t until March of 2022 when Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed the Parental Rights in Education law, more accurately dubbed the “Don’t Say Gay” law, that the term truly took hold.

The law is based upon the faulty and paranoid notion that educators are trying to “indoctrinate” students, as per the claims of Joe McCarthy and Anita Bryant described previously. It prohibits classroom discussion or instruction on gender identity or sexual orientation in Kindergarten through Third Grade in Florida public schools, while also vaguely prohibiting similar discussions for any grade that are not “age appropriate” (Center for Extremism, 2022).⁷ Outraged that their bill, which prohibited mentioning the word “gay” in classroom contexts, would somehow get nicknamed the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, Christina PuShaw, DeSantis’ press secretary, tweeted on March 4 that, “the bill that liberals inaccurately call ‘Don’t Say Gay’ would be more accurately described as an Anti-Grooming Bill” (Center for Extremism, 2022). She followed that irresponsible statement with another tweet claiming that anyone who opposed the bill was, “probably a groomer.” Not to be outdone, at the signing ceremony on March 28, DeSantis claimed that law’s opponents “support the sexualization of kids in kindergarten” and “camouflage their true intentions” in a callback to the 1970s claim of the secretive, sneaky gay (Kirchick, 2022).

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

Terminology and Context

Unfortunately, we must now talk about child molestation and properly define some really ugly terms and phenomena, since everyone and their brother is throwing them around as if words don’t have meanings. First up is pedophilia. **Pedophilia** is a psychological and neurological disorder in which the preference for sexual interaction is with prepubescent children (see Tenbergen, et al. 2015; Ponseti, et al., 2014). It differs from **child sexual abuse**, which refers to any act with a child/minor under the age of 18, prepubescent or not, for the sexual gratification of another. **Grooming** is a complicated, multi-step process, so complicated, in fact, that it will require another book to discuss in detail. For now, grooming can be thought of as the establishment of a relationship, trust, and emotional connection for the purpose of manipulating, exploiting, and coercing another person, potentially (but not necessarily) to sexual ends – with an important caveat being that this relationship-building process typically develops over a period of months or years before any abuse or exploitation occurs (see Headley, 2019).⁸ Additionally, child molesters and sex offenders are two *entirely* separate things, but let’s put a pin in that for now because I can already sense the reader’s eyes glazing over.

Pedophilia and grooming are sometimes related to each other, but not always. Recall that pedophilia is a disorder that causes one to have a sexual preference or exclusivity for prepubescent children. Some pedophiles will sexually groom children over a period of time before moving to abuse them, while others will not engage in grooming behavior at all. Pedophiles exist among all sexualities and gender identities because sexual

orientation (and gender identity) is entirely separate from pedophilia.

Simply put, a person's sexual orientation has no predictive ability as to whether that person could be a pedophile, child molester, sex offender, or "groomer". This gets particularly complicated and is best demonstrated by examining the issue of **crossover** which pertains to a perpetrator changing from one type of victim to another. For pedophilia in particular, the victim's gender doesn't have as much to do with the victimization as does the victim's age, and crossover is typically seen in offenses against younger children under age six. In short, the younger the victim, the less pedophiles express a choice between the genders of their victims (Levenson, Becker, & Morin, 2008; Kleban, Chesin, Jeglic, & Mercado, 2013). Sex characteristics tend to become more pronounced as children get older, thus, gender preference plays more of a role the more developed the victim becomes. However, younger children down to infants are more androgynous – hence, the less the gender of the victim (and thus the offender's sexual orientation) has to do with the offense. *The pedophile is attracted to their victim based primarily on their age* (see Ponseti, et al., 2014), to the point that sexual crimes against younger toddlers and infants involve no grooming at all, for how can one build a years-long relationship with an infant? Instead, these sex crimes are among some of the most violent and grotesque instances of rape that an investigator can ever witness.

Thus, much of this "grooming" and "gays/transgenders are pedophiles" narrative falls apart right at the outset. It's simply a matter of defining terms, and the terms describe separate phenomena while the "attack" portion of DARVO attempts to blur them together. The issue of whether the LGBT+ community sexually abuses children at higher rates than the heterosexual population has actually been extensively studied – and they definitely don't (Herek; Zero Abuse Project; Jenny, Roesler, & Poyer, 1994; Plante, 2018).⁹ In fact, claiming that homosexuals are responsible for CSA can and has been used to provide cover for actual predators and pedophiles, as in the case of The Boys of St. Vincent, one of the earliest CSA scandals of the Catholic Church (Ohi, 2000). Such instances highlight the role the scapegoat plays in the role of DARVO.

Specious arguments have taken on a new but similar form as more people become aware of the existence of transgender persons. Not only are such individuals alleged to be "grooming" young children into their "ideology" of simply existing as human beings, but they now occupy spaces that were previously divided along a fiercely-guarded binary view of gender, and they are perceived to be a threat to individuals who still only accept this binary view, especially cisgender women. This fear follows a long history of paranoia about men dressing up as women not necessarily to offend against women, but rather to fool other men into sexual escapades, thus depriving the seduced of their masculinity, much as with the original fear of homosexuality.¹⁰ However, in recent years this narrative has changed to argue that transgender women pose a grave danger to femininity and are a sexual assault risk to women themselves.

Groups have sprung up in the United States and abroad claiming that transgender women pose a sexist threat to women's rights, that they are merely men imposing themselves into women's spaces. Setting aside for a moment the issues of genetics, neuroscience, and biology (issues that always get ignored by these groups anyway), claims of equality and "fair play" dominate this arena. Don't we want equality between the sexes? Isn't this just more male-imposed patriarchy onto women's spaces? Men are infiltrating women's locker rooms, bathrooms, and sports! Isn't that unfair, and more to

the point, dangerous? Now of course, the issue of transgender men – and thus women “infiltrating” men’s binarily-defined areas never gets raised – but this argument isn’t about reason or logic.

This has led to a number of claims about the criminality and sexual offense rate of transgender women. In testimony submitted to British Parliament on this issue, it was claimed that “it’s well established that trans women offend at the same rate as cis men” (Freedman, Stocik, & Sullivan, 2021). Similarly, Fair Play for Women, a British organization that advocates for the separation of “biological” women from transgender women, claims among other things, that approximately 50% of transgender women in prison are sex offenders (Fair Play for Women, 2020). Key to these claims is the so-called “Swedish Study,” AKA Dhejne, et al., 2011, which examined the “mortality, morbidity, and criminal rate after surgical sex reassignment of transsexual persons,” an important pioneering study.

Admittedly, this seems rather open and shut. Are transgender women just naturally predisposed to committing sex crimes against cisgender women, as is claimed? Or do a whole lot of alleged experts simply not know how to read and interpret data?

We’ve been here before, and I suspect the reader knows where this is going. Dhejne et al., 2011 examined the conviction rates of transgender persons, but *not* what those convictions were for. The authors found that transgender women were convicted at similar rates to men, but not that they were convicted for the same crimes – this speaks more to the overcriminalization of this population discussed in the last chapter than the population’s alleged “predatory” nature, once again highlighting the population’s marginalization. Yet, it is spun to say the exact opposite thing in a perfect bait-and-switch that escapes most people’s attention. In short, these women are being labeled as “sex offenders” despite absolutely no evidence whatsoever that they’ve committed sexually based offenses. Not only is this defamatory, but it’s also incredibly asinine. Worse still is that this claim is being brought by supposedly educated PhD-holders whom one would hope would know how to read an empirical study. Adding further insult to injury is that such numbskulls have somehow managed to successfully influence public policy despite these talking points having been repeatedly debunked (Hamilton, 2022; Fisher, 2017).

Now before we continue, let’s put all of this in context: what, exactly, are people getting so upset about when it comes to transgender persons and “drag queens?” Specifically, what kind of a threat to women and children are we *really* talking about here?

Let’s even assume, just for the sake of argument, that transgender women do offend at roughly the same rate as cisgender men. Setting that questionable assumption aside for the moment, transgender individuals experience sexual assault at four times the rate of their non-transgender peers, up to a rate of 66% of the entire population. Additionally, this minority only makes up (based on possibly problematic statistics; see the last chapter; Herman, Flores, and O’Neill, 2022; Chalabi, 2014) 0.52% of the population. Not 52%, not 5.2%, but 0.52% of the entire U.S. population.

This means that, assuming all else is equal, even in the worst-case scenario being presented for our analysis, 99.48% of all offenses against women and children in the United States *still* have absolutely nothing to do with transgender women.

In short: while the media likes to focus on cases of transgender people committing

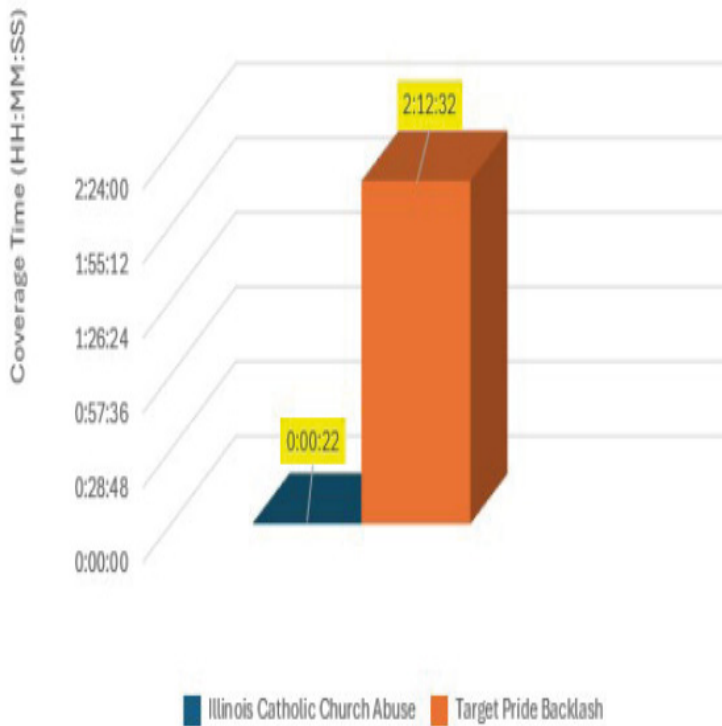
sex crimes because they are extraordinary, rare, and thus newsworthy, media reports focusing on sex crimes committed by transgender individuals only really serve to further stigmatize the population, given the lack of significance these crimes have on the overall pattern (three times in five years in the case of drag queens specifically). Far more transgender people are victims than offenders, but the popular portrayal is the exact opposite, once again highlighting the complicity of the media in all of this.

One couldn't ask for a more picture-perfect example of DARVO.

In short, this nonsense is missing the forest for the trees, and it's doing even more harm to the few trees that actually are still standing despite the serious adverse conditions they've somehow managed to take root in. If one actually cares about protecting women and children, then one should rationally focus on the 99.48% of offenses against them rather than the 0.52%. But it is clear that nothing about this discussion is rational. Something else is clearly going on here. It's almost as if a moral panic is being stirred up with explicit intent.

Such panics, I am sure, have nothing to do with someone or some group taking advantage of the public's ignorance about human trafficking, fear of crimes against children, and widespread (and ignorant) distrust of a vulnerable minority all to gain power and profit. It's not at all as if this were a time-tested tactic to win popular favor, hence why this entire issue is so damned politicized to begin with. To make matters even worse, there is a ridiculously strong profit motive present for con artists and frauds to further exploit those who have already been subjugated. I'm sure there's absolutely no evidence of *that* just randomly lying around (Zarnowski, 2023; Mull, 2023; Tiffany, 2021; Moore, 2023; Internal Revenue Service, 2015-2021; Rabey, 2022; Brewster, 2023; Rondeaux, 2021).

Fox News' time coverage of
Catholic Church abuse vs Target Pride backlash
(May 23, 2023 -- May 30, 2023)



Source: MediaMatters

Figure 10.1. (Monroe, 2023) *Fox News' coverage of Target pride backlash vs. sexual abuse in Illinois Catholic Church.* Fox News dedicated hours of airtime to manufacturing outrage about Target stores selling rainbow clothing, but only spent 22 seconds about actual child sexual abuse in Illinois Catholic Churches. Approximately 450 members of the Catholic clergy abused nearly 2,000 children since 1950 alone. See Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 3(e) Dec. 9, 1948, S. Exec. Doc.

Much to this point is that in a period of less than three days in 2023, three unique, individual child rapists were arrested who had made “anti-grooming” right-wing posts to social media. That’s how many drag queens were arrested for raping a child in the entire previous five-year period. However, it’s important to note that this three-for-three ratio is only for those who made such posts on social media. In one twenty-four-hour period, six separate cisgender heterosexual white Christian male child rapists were either sentenced or arrested, which is more than the number of drag queens ever arrested for sexually assaulting a child (Zarnowski, 2023). That’s interesting, isn’t it? Very interesting, in fact: somehow, *that* story didn’t make the top stories on Fox News, nor did the one about thousands of children raped by clergy in Illinois (see Fig. 10.1). This phenomenon is almost identical to what we saw in the first chapter: one can easily get the sense that someone is trying to make us chase ghosts rather than confront the real elephant in the room. We can actually see that these efforts to “save the children” and ensure “fair play for women” aren’t about protecting women and children at all, but perhaps rather something much, much darker. After all, I’m sure that the political interests that Fox represents aren’t also the interests and personalities responsible for bringing child labor back to America (Grose, 2023; Freedom United, 2023; Geggis, 2023; Finn, 2024).

Deny, attack, reverse victim and offender.

Real-World Harm

As if this were not enough, horrific claims of genital mutilation of children accompany these claims of LGBT+ “grooming” and child abuse (see Gutfeld, 2023). Of course, no one is actually “mutilating” young children – well, at least not in terms of gender transition surgery; we’ll come back to that. Gender transition surgery is *not* performed in the United States on minors except in a handful of cases of *extreme medical emergency* (recall the discussion on gender dysphoria and suicide) as determined by a trained and licensed medical professional, and even then never on youths under 14 (Reyes, 2022). Such surgery is explicitly *not* what’s being impacted by youth transgender healthcare bans, but rather life-affirming care that reduces the suicidality of transgender youth by up to 73% – suicidality caused by a lack of acceptance from the same people claiming to want to “save” them in the first place (Bruce, et al., 2023; Nolan, et al., 2023; Austin, Craig, D’Souza, & McNroy, 2022; Tordoff, et al., 2022). Gender-affirming healthcare is literally a form of suicide prevention, and it saves children’s lives rather than endangering them, contrary to the claim that transitioning is something that a child will “grow out of” or “regret.” In fact, such gender-affirming surgery has an overall regret rate of only 1% across 27 different studies (Tanner, 2023). By comparison, total knee replacement surgery and cisgender breast augmentation surgery each have regret rates of around 30%, and a regret rate of 14.4% is found across a wide variety of surgical specialties (Nolan, Weinstein, & Schechter, 2023).

Life Satisfaction After Gender-Affirming Surgery

Level of satisfaction with life since receiving surgery for gender identity/transition (of respondents who had surgery)

A Lot More Satisfied 88%

A Little More Satisfied 9%

Neither More Or Less Satisfied 2%

A Little Less Satisfied 1%

A Lot Less Satisfied 1%

Source: Early Insights: A Report of the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey

Figure 10.2. (James, et al., 2024) *Life satisfaction after gender-affirming surgery.*

True suicide prevention does not consist in merely providing a hotline number to

someone in crisis and calling it a day – rather, it involves making sure that person never reaches crisis in the first place. Yet, those who promote anti-LGBT+ legislation seem intent on accelerating the rate at which these individuals reach crisis. A bill passed by the Kansas legislature was particularly heinous in this regard, having banned transgender women from accessing domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers despite this population suffering from appalling rates of sexual and domestic violence (Hanna, 2023). The legislation also classified intersex persons as “disabled,” once again raising the specter of eugenics, a familiar theme. Nor does targeting “gender-affirming healthcare” only affect the transgender community: after (corrupt and criminally indicted) Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton targeted Dell Children’s adolescent clinic for providing such care, forcing scores of doctors there to leave, Texas children and their parents were left scrambling to find care for everything from menstrual health to eating disorders to adrenal issues (Klibanoff, 2023). Again, one is reminded that if one wants to commit genocide, one starts by cutting healthcare. And if one wants to cut healthcare for everyone, especially women, targeting the LGBT+ community is a perfect entry point (Safi, Anwari, & Safi, 2022; Mahase, 2023; Euromaidan Press, 2023).

Likewise, there is no transgender “ideology” that is being used to indoctrinate children into something they “grow out of.” Ideology is a driving force in the other direction, though: of transgender youth who choose to permanently detransition, the vast majority cite discrimination and parental pressure as their reasons for detransitioning, with only a remarkable 0.4% citing that they no longer identify as transgender (James, et al., 2016; see also Olson, 2022; Tannehill, 2017). The only ideology present in this entire discussion is the one in which the biology and existence of transgender persons is fundamentally denied: an ideology that is being enforced through traditional dress codes that determine what boys and girls are permitted to wear due to the arbitrariness of gender norms (not to mention what names and pronouns one may or may not go by). In 1800s America, for example, pink was considered a manly color – being a derivative of the warlike red color – whereas blue was seen as more of a color intended for girls. Cowboys, the epitome of manliness for many Americans, wore pink quite frequently, often with floral embroidery and accents to boot, demonstrating how haphazard these norms are (Broadway, 2013). This trend lasted through the 1950s with Roy Rogers’ son wearing pink in a Sears catalog. How pink came to be associated with femininity is another cautionary tale of good intentions and unexpected consequences, but that’s of little importance to our discussion here.¹¹ What is important is that this is a moral panic, plain and simple.



Figure 10.3. (Sears, 1955) *Pink as a masculine color.*

Yet, this moral panic does reveal something truly sinister about the gender ideology

that is being enforced through this insipid paranoia. *This* gender ideology, the enforcement of the gender binary, is the one that comes with actual genital mutilations of young children, all without their consent.¹² Intersex people, also known as hermaphrodites, are those who are born with ambiguous or both male and female genitalia. Intersex genital mutilation is the practice of surgically modifying the genitals of young intersex children to fit within cultural and religious norms of the gender binary, often wrapped in terms of medical terminology and necessity as the reasoning given for the surgery (Papisova & Kheraj, 2017). In “developed countries” such as the United States, about 1 to 2 out of every 1,000 infants is subjected to intersex genital mutilation, that is,

...non-consensual, medically unnecessary, irreversible, cosmetic genital surgeries, and/or other harmful medical treatments that would not be considered for “normal” children, practiced without evidence of benefit for the children concerned, but justified by societal and cultural prejudice, stereotypes, norms and beliefs, and often directly financed by the states. Typical forms of IGM include “feminising” or “masculinising”, “corrective” genital surgery, sterilising procedures, [and the] imposition of hormones.¹³

In short, it's literally everything that the interdimensional satanic transgender mafia™ is accused of, except this is *real*, done without the child's consent, and performed literally in service of an actual, honest-to-God gender ideology. In less-developed countries, treatment ranges from severe bullying to exile, abandonment, and even infanticide (StopIGM). None of this is necessary. In fact, research shows that intersex children are healthy until they grow old enough to decide for themselves whether to undergo surgery (Papisova & Kheraj, 2017). In fact, that's exactly the point here: consent, agency, and free will are what's important where such matters are concerned. The same issue is becoming clear in both female and male genital cutting, AKA circumcision, where the agency of the child is often ignored for the sake of cultural and religious norms and preferences of the parents. Indeed, there appears to be too much overlap between the physical effects, symbolic meanings, and motivations (and a noted lack of medical benefit) behind these practices for there to be much difference declared between them (Earp & Steinfield, 2017; see also Earp, Abdulcadir, & Liao, 2023). This results in situations such as the following:

They literally just removed my clitoris. And when I was 11, they did a vaginoplasty. So they, without my permission or consent, stretched out my vagina in ways to make it more accommodating to my future husband's penis. And these are a few of the things that happen to intersex children all over the world. It's an injustice and it's an attack against our human rights.¹⁴

But God forbid an adult identify as transgender and actually *consent* to such an operation. That's just a bridge too far.

The horrors of the DARVO should be clear in this example. However, there is more at play here than mere projection, and it is worth exploring in depth to obtain a better understanding of the underlying psychology involved as well as the manufactured nature of reality. To do this, we need to understand what a psychological **construct** is. A construct is little more than a well-defined framework for describing or interpreting

something (Explore Psychology, 2024). In this case, we're interested in describing a psychological phenomenon: a behavior, emotion, or experience. Now of course, these constructs don't have a presence in our physical reality. One cannot weigh happiness in pounds or kilograms or measure how tall a person's intelligence is. Such terms don't make any sense.

For psychologists, constructs allow the intangibles of our world to be measured. But for everyday people (or, rather, everyday people's *brains*, through which they perceive and interpret the world), constructs give structure and meaning to an otherwise chaotic and confusing reality, much like conspiracy theories do (see Uscinski & Parent, 2014). Once one understands this concept and sees how much of our society consists of and depends upon constructs and just how fragile constructs really are, much of the problem we are faced with begins to make terrifying sense. Some examples of constructs are as follows: Love. Self-esteem. Mental health. Bias. Morality. Civilization. Reality itself (see Tselios, 2020; Bergquist).

The meaning of the word "woman."

Gender (and even sex) is actually a construct, existing on a vast continuum rather than a narrowly labeled binary, as we have just seen. The concept of "race" is another similar construct that often trips people up. And much like the panic over "mixing of the races" in previous generations, the mere existence of persons who do not neatly fall into such arbitrarily defined and culturally imposed notions of "man *or* woman, not both, and certainly not some third option" threatens this established social hierarchy that has evolved along this perceived dividing line. This hierarchy, of course, is intrinsically connected to one's perception of status, worth, self-esteem, and their overall worldview. Again, we find that people emotionally invest in and believe in social hierarchies for the same reasons they invest in and believe in conspiracy theories (Koski, Xie, & Olson, 2015). A threat to this worldview is thus perceived as being equivalent to a threat against the person holding the belief, as well as to their sense of self-worth and their understanding of their place in the valued hierarchy and the universe itself.¹⁵

Those who value this hierarchy also innately value the social stratification and inequality that comes along with it. It simply makes cognitive sense to them. It's the natural order; it's all they've ever known or could ever imagine. For instance, those who tend to identify with what are typically described as "traditional" values tend to value social hierarchies, to the point that they see a mental health benefit from sustaining and participating in those hierarchies (which makes sense – such members benefit at the expense of non-members, after all; Maercker, 2016). If that worldview is challenged, not necessarily intentionally but rather by the mere existence of an outlier who suggests that the central thesis of the worldview is factually and objectively false, then the holder of that worldview will begin to experience cognitive dissonance until they can explain away the existence of the outlier. Mentally, this is incredibly distressing for the individual. It feels as though they're being told that all they've ever known and valued is a lie. It's as though the universe is collapsing around them, or that *the very social fabric of society is being torn asunder and thrown out the window by the forces of Satan himself*.

Such is the dissonance that results when an individual who values the hierarchy of the

gender binary narrative is confronted by the mere *existence* of an intersex child (and by extension, the transgender or non-binary person). They have no idea what to do with the information. Is the child male? Female? Well, it certainly can't be both – or neither. Such options don't exist. It's either option A or option B. There is no third option. This further raises a lot of additional questions about how to treat the child. Is it given the status and privilege afforded to boys and men, or is it relegated to the second-class citizenship imposed upon girls and women? The hierarchal worldview provides no guidance as to how to behave towards this mysterious *other*.

Some may have trouble understanding the immense distress triggered by facing a new reality. Imagine if one were a seventh-century European peasant who saw a bright light shoot out of the sky during the night and who then set out at dawn to locate the fallen star. However, upon locating the crash site suppose one found not a fabled object but rather a bunch of little green men piling out of a crashed spaceship all asking which way it was to Pluto. One would have no concept of what was happening, of where any of this came from or what Pluto even was, and would immediately start wracking one's mind for cultural references to make sense of it all, likely settling on religious notions of angels and demons as an explanation. One would simply refuse to confront the reality of what's occurring before their very eyes – that God's infinite creation is so much more grand, beautiful, and complex than one's mind currently has the capacity to grasp – and would likely instead run screaming in the opposite direction while the lost visitors were left wondering what in the world they did to cause such great offense.

It is the same situation for those who commit to the worldview of the gender binary to the point that they will mutilate the genitals of perfectly healthy children in order to make the world around them conform to their understanding, their schema, of what that world *should* look like. And they will do this all while accusing the *other* of child mutilation just in order to resolve the moral ramifications of what they did to settle their own mental distress.¹⁶ They might even be driven to kill in order to preserve what they, under their current limitations, perceive as the constructed “natural order” of the universe. A construct that is, of course, entirely artificial.

From this examination we see that we are suffering from a crisis of imagination, limiting ourselves to definitions and worldviews that are not only inaccurate but that actively harm our functioning and well-being, especially children's well-being (United Way NCA, 2023; Chakrabarti, 2022). The result is that members of high-status groups present with highly autonomous and individualistic worldviews while members of lower-status, and thus under-resourced, groups express more collectivist and far less “personalized” worldviews (Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2019). In fact, substantial evidence exists that this has historically been necessary for the lower castes' very survival due to the excesses of the autonomy afforded to the elite.¹⁷

Making matters even worse is the way in which the loosey-goosey labeling of people as “groomers” and “pedophiles,” terms that we defined previously and that have specific meanings, weakens our actual efforts to prevent actual grooming and pedophilia. When sexual grooming is confused with other behaviors that are not actually sexual grooming, it endangers potential victims (including children) by preventing them from understanding what is happening to them and the danger they are in. It additionally

confuses adults and others who could prevent abuse and exploitation from occurring, and predators absolutely thrive in such chaos. Moreover, research clearly shows that comprehensive sex education, beginning at an early age and including for young children, is the single most effective method for preventing CSA (Wilson & Dickson, 2022). Politicized misinformation aimed at stirring up anger over “parents’ rights” and muddying the water about what grooming really is actually harms legitimate efforts to prevent CSA and human trafficking.

Indeed, people who hurl such weaponized insults such as “groomer” and “pedophile” for political purposes, and often against teachers and social workers, do the very damage they claim they are trying to prevent. Such attacks reduce trust in people whom children, especially LGBT+ children who may not be able to report abuse to their parents, would otherwise turn to (Rozsa, 2022). These children, who may be being exploited by their own parents, now have no safe place to go or report to thanks to the caustic nature of the new breed of American politics. Moreover, these vicious attacks serve to keep vulnerable children in a spot where, unable to report to anyone, they are more easily victimized than ever before – which it turns out might be the entire point.

We’ll explore this in detail in the next volume, but for now one might be interested in the words of a dedicated sex crimes detective I spoke with about this. Keep in mind, this detective has spent twenty-nine years in law enforcement; the last ten spent specifically on sex crime investigations. We spoke shortly after *The Sound of Freedom* hit theatres, and a new wave of misinformation was sweeping the infosphere. Never quite sure of how aware others are of the reality of this matter, I carefully prodded as to what he thought about the movie and the conspiracy culture narratives that it promoted. I was pleasantly surprised to be on the receiving end of a whirlwind of a profanity-laced tirade about horse manure, sensationalism, and how carte blanche labelling of non-cisnet individuals as “groomers” only diverted attention from actual sexual predators and fortifies their finely cultivated masks of respectability. I asked if any of the perps he sat down with ever said anything about these narratives, to which he replied, “The monsters I interview on a daily basis frequently giggle about it.”

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

A New Jim Crow

Despite being the subject of over two-hundred pieces of legislation targeting them amidst this panic and furor, there are fewer than fifty transgender athletes in public schools in the United States. However, there are 25 million girls between the ages of 5 and 18 in those same schools (Zarnowski, 2023). Now those young girls have been rendered more vulnerable than ever before as adults demand that before competing in sports they must reveal their genitalia to prove they are not one of the fewer than fifty transgender athletes.

Such an unbelievable instance occurred in June of 2023, when a nine-year-old girl was competing in a fourth-grade shot put competition. The grandfather of another competitor began accosting the child, angrily insisting that her parents produce her birth certificate so that he could confirm that the young girl was born female. Undeterred by the parents’ refusal to abide by his request, the man then proceeded to confront a second young girl stating, “well if she is not a boy, then she is obviously trans.” (Reeve, 2023)

The older man's wife then started calling the parent of the first girl, "a genital mutilator, a groomer, and a pedophile" while demanding that the child submit to nothing short of a genital inspection to prove that she was in fact "biologically" a girl. It is important here to stop and realize that any genital inspection that is not medically necessary is, of course, nothing short of sexual assault. The hype and fear about the sexual identity of what totals fewer than fifty children in a country of over 300 million led to two grandparents wanting to sexually assault a nine-year-old girl simply because she was doing better in a competition than their grandchild. What in the world was this couple's reasoning for questioning the femininity of two young girls?

They both had short hair, so obviously this meant that they both had penises.

This was hardly the first instance of girls or women who don't appear "feminine" enough being harassed and having their gender questioned (Zarnowski, 2023). In 2022, a professional nanny who had recently cut her hair short recorded her assault in a Las Vegas casino bathroom by another woman who accused her of being transgender (Wiggins, 2022). Not long after the shot-put competition in June 2023, Michelle Dionne Peacock was murdered in Richmond, Indiana after her assailant, Tommy W. Earl, cut her throat with a straight razor. In explaining his actions to investigators, Earl stated that Peacock was "a male acting like a woman" (Perry, 2023). Peacock was, of course, cisgender. In October of that same year, a woman making a purchase at a deli in New York City was maced, kicked in the head, and then dragged by her hair by a cashier who "mistook" her for a trans woman (Parascandola, 2023). The assailant was not charged. This exemplifies what transgender people have been screaming for us to realize for such a long time: increased violence and discrimination against transgender women also results in increased violence against cisgender women.

Yet this is not the end of the violence that this particular instance of DARVO causes, nor of how it predisposes children to future trafficking. One of the key arguments behind this panic is that allowing transgender students to use the bathroom or locker room that corresponds to their chosen gender identity is dangerous to cisgendered students, because the evil and pedophilic transgender student will rape or otherwise sexually assault others. Thus, to reduce sexual assaults, transgender students must be restricted to the rooms that correspond to the gender they were assigned at birth. A 2019 study in *Pediatrics* studied the effect this had on sexual assaults among the students who were segregated in rooms by gender assigned at birth versus those with more permissive rules for transgender students. The results were shocking: transgender boys whose choice was restricted had 1.26 times the sexual assault risk of transgender boys who were allowed to use the room of their choice. Correspondingly, assigned-female-at-birth (AFAB) students whose choice was restricted had a risk 1.42 times that of those who were unrestricted, and transgender girls who had to use the rooms corresponding to their gender assigned at birth had a risk of sexual assault 2.49 times that of their unrestricted peers (Murchison, Agénor, Reisner, & Watson, 2019).

This bears repeating: in a half-witted attempt to protect kids from sexual assault and "grooming," we're actually causing more children to be assaulted.

The talking points and obvious motives behind those pushing the anti-trans narrative make this outcome rather predictable. "Gender critical" individuals in England are increasingly pushing for so-called "biological clothing" as a solution to the issue, a solution also espoused by United States conservatives (Reed, 2023). For the gender

critical feminist, gender doesn't exist on a spectrum. Rather, it exists on the same binary that they believe biological sex does¹⁸: male and female. Thus, these feminist groups propose as a solution that men should wear clothing that is "consistent with their biological sex," such as pants, suits, and so on. Women, too, would be forced to wear dresses, skirts, and the like, all as a form of a societal dress code. This all raises a big question:

What kind of feminism is this exactly?

While I hate to invoke *Rick and Morty* twice in the same book, this just seems like sexism with extra steps. In fact, when one examines the specific proposals of these groups, we find that it is the very same thing: it is the same old sexism, only this time claiming to be "feminism." It's the same BS wearing literally the same "biological" clothes just on a different day, except this time in the guise of "compassionate" language. Yet, compassionate patriarchy is still patriarchy and fascism is still fascism. It's *doublespeak*. War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength. It's almost as if all these phenomena we've examined originate from the same source, the same group. A group that wants to keep *both* transgender persons *and* cisgendered women oppressed and vulnerable – and thus more easily manipulated and exploited (Wiggins, 2022). To make matters worse is the fact that the whole charade is incredibly transparent, which makes the fact that so many people have fallen for this nonsense all the more remarkable.

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

From a 2023 social media post by a gender critical activist:

Sexism is treating one group worse than the other. It involves oppression.

Where is the oppression in having sex based school uniforms?

Indeed, girls need blouses and skirts to reflect their biological differences, including their breasts and their hips. So that, even if the uniform was intended to be sex neutral, trousers and shirts would still need to be co-opted to reflect the innate biological differences between boys and girls.

Figure 10.4. (Reed, 2023) *It's almost as though they aren't even trying any more.* If one follows the logic on display here, then there isn't necessarily anything misogynistic about reducing "womanhood" down to being a walking vagina with the ability to incubate babies.

Of course, such “groomer” nonsense leads to direct physical assaults and violence against the LGBT+ community, further isolating and disenfranchising those already predisposed to being trafficked (Mathias, 2022; Mondeaux, 2022; Strudwick, 2022; Allam, 2022; Bellware, 2022; Konig, 2022; Gabbatt, 2022; Quinlan, 2022; Carlisle, 2022; Collins & Madeni, 2022; Clark, 2022; Pitargue, 2022; Downey, 2022; Assunção, 2022; Bartlett, 2022; Owen, 2023; Qamar, 2023; Gilbert, 2022; Schermele, 2023; Cooper, 2023a; Tirrell, 2024).¹⁹ *That’s the entire point*, much like the creation of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War was intended to roll back the gains Blacks had made and keep them oppressed, allowing for their continued exploitation after formal slavery was outlawed.²⁰ This is, of course, incredibly telling, and it has been all along (Rosenthal, 2023). If you’re threatening to blow up a school, children’s hospital, or youth event, then you’re not exactly as concerned about protecting children as you claim to be. Something else is quite obviously driving your actions (see Bartlett, 2022; Owen, 2023; Qamar, 2023; Gilbert, 2022; Schermele, 2023; Cooper, 2023a; Tirrell, 2024).

 **Link 10.1.** <https://tinyurl.com/4dcbh8jd> (Owen, 2023).

18 U.S.C. § 373. Mens rea. “**Schools Report Bomb Threats Following Libs of TikTok Anti-LGBTQ Posts**” was the headline in an October, 2023 article in VICE magazine. The article was one of many that followed describing the activities of Chaya Raichik, a right-wing anti-LGBTQ activist who took great pride in the fact that her social media posts led to numerous bomb threats, death threats and harassment against public schools, universities, libraries, and hospitals. A subsequent article in USA Today further described such threats, which increased after Raichik publicized that article with a photo showing her grinning face holding a copy of the paper. She then doubled down by changing the Libs of TikTok icon to show images of bombs. (See Bartlett, 2022; Owen, 2023; Qamar, 2023; Gilbert, 2022; Schermele, 2023; Cooper, 2023a; Tirrell, 2024.) Is there a better example of stochastic terrorism?

If one recalls the discussion of how people become vulnerable to trafficking in the first place, one will recall that migration plays a key role in such vulnerability. As if things were not bad enough and the LGBT+ community weren’t already predisposed to experiencing the slave trade, the new Rainbow Scare has internally displaced approximately 130,000 to 260,000 transgender people in the United States (Reed, 2023a). These are people who have had to flee their own cities and states to escape oppressive laws threatening their lives, sometimes in the dark of night, and it is happening all without media attention. An additional million are considering fleeing due to worsening discrimination, increasing restrictions on healthcare, and less access to well-paying jobs (Reed, 2023a; see also Safi, Anwari, & Safi, 2022; Mahase, 2023; Euromaidan Press, 2023).

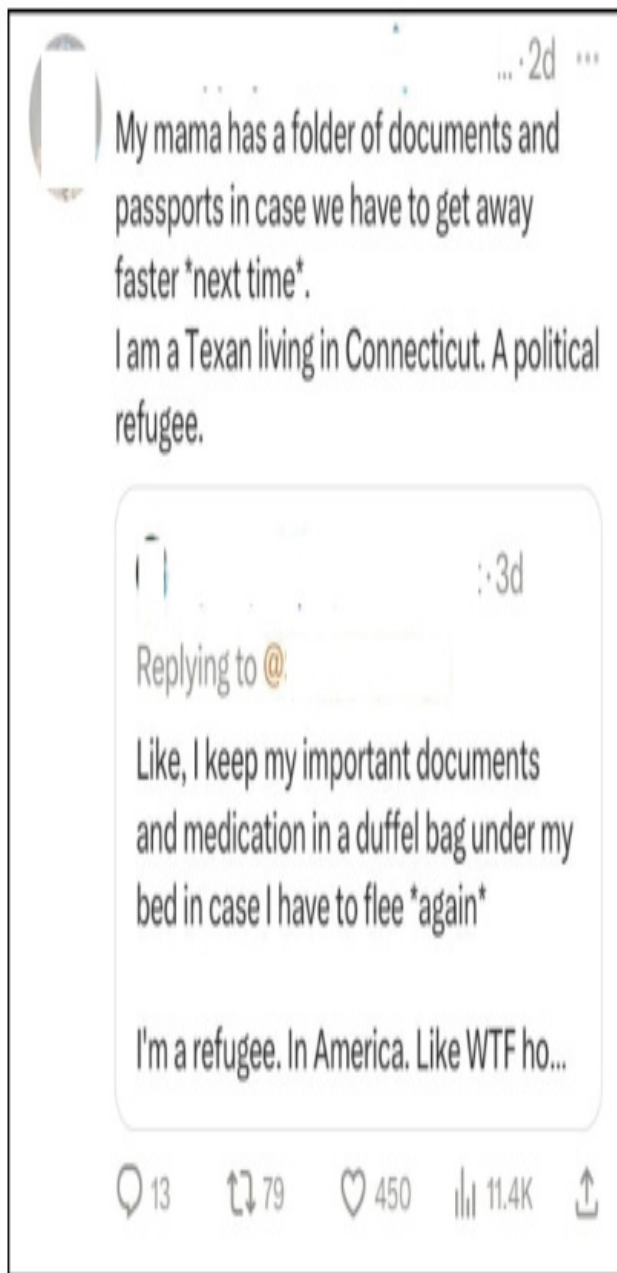


Figure 10.5. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Child Exiles in America*. No child should have to live with a bug-out bag ready to go, least of all “again.”

To be blunt, indications are that this is trending toward, if it doesn’t outright reveal,

an active and ongoing pursuit of genocide (Genocide Watch, 2023; Reed, 2023; Cooper, 2023; Zarnowski, 2023; Houston, 2023; Alfonseca, 2023; see also Nellans, 2020). History seems to repeat the same playbook over and over again (Cooper, 2023; Zarnowski, 2023). And this isn't simply describing the slave trade. This inflicted vulnerability is a key factor in upholding slavery for the *explicit purpose* of genocide.²¹ Indeed, the language of genocide is clearly visible in the Heritage Foundation's description of transgender rights as a "social contagion," a term they associate with outdated notions of "sexual deviancy", notions so outdated that they were – scientifically at least – relegated to the past in the 20th century.



Link 10.2. <https://x.com/Heritage/status/1660111878738067457>. This post by The Heritage Foundation was in response to another by The American Conservative. Both posts typify the ill-informed, disparaging, and dangerous rhetoric that these two organizations often direct toward people who identify as LGBTQ.

From here the question of malice arises again. Much of what is occurring appears at first to be a result of mere ignorance of basic facts, dynamics, and human biology/psychology. Ignorance is not the insult that many think it to be, assuming one takes the necessary steps to correct one's state of ignorance through education. Likewise, one should be careful not to assume intentional malice when ignorance suffices as an explanation. To this end, I have been careful to not assert malice where I cannot prove it: we saw this play out in the matter of abortion politics and its intersection with human trafficking.

However, there comes a point where a willing, conscious blindness to reality occurs, a point where a person has had a chance – rather, multiple chances – to rid themselves of their ignorance and yet has actively and repeatedly chosen not to do so. It is at this point that ignorance can no longer be distinguished from malice: there is simply no way to exist in such a state of ignorance except with intentionality and deliberateness, i.e., *malice* (Arendt, 2006). Thus, one is forced to conclude that sufficiently innovative forms of ignorance are perfectly indistinguishable from malice.²²

Perhaps I shouldn't have let Melton, Israel, et al. off the hook so easily after all (see Chapter 5).

Or maybe I was at least partially correct in my analysis: the continuation of these debunked notions and outdated norms that maintain slavery in its myriad forms keep arising as a matter of psychological system justification. **System justification** is a social psychological phenomenon through which defending the status quo or justifying the system serves as a method to settle internal disquiet such as cognitive dissonance. However, it's not just cognitive dissonance that produces these uncomfortable feelings; it's a whole host of behavior from one's sense of social identity, to belief in a just world (the just world fallacy), to aspects of social dominance theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994). At the core of this is, once again, the human ego and the innate need for self-esteem. People need to have favorable beliefs about themselves (ego justification), about groups they belong to (group justification), and also about the overarching social structure that they are entangled with and subject to (system justification). If they don't feel good about those things, why would they continue to exist within those groups or structures? If one lacks self-esteem, one doesn't see a reason to keep existing, as we saw in the chapter dealing with mental health; but if enough people lack sufficient system justification, all

System justification explains a *lot* about the DARVO dynamic and the phenomenon of projection. People have strong personal needs and these needs, such as the need for safety, order, and stability, can serve as a motivation to justify the status quo as legitimate or even desirable, even if the person realizes the status quo might be disadvantageous to some people, perhaps including themselves. This often results in **out-group favoritism** in which low-status groups accept a notion of inferiority while retaining a positive view of higher-status groups. Instances of internalized racism and misogyny are poignant examples, as are cases when the poor defend the wealth and the means of generating said wealth of billionaires and large banking institutions (Caricati & Owuamalam, 2020).

This results in people being both victims and supporters of the system that victimizes them, a position that is not contradictory but rather central to the formation of system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji & Nosek, 2004; see also Jost & Van der Toorn, 2012). System justification explains why people willingly submit to unjust authority (Jost, 2021). Simply put, resistance has a cost, a price, even if it's just social or psychological: one can be ostracized for acting out, or it may merely take psychological resources to come up with an alternative to the status quo. Either way, resistance involves an adaptive cost that is not incurred by passive acceptance of the way things are currently done, and evolutionarily speaking, we tend to choose the option that costs the fewest resources. This calculus is shared by most humans to the point that a shared environment arises in which the existing social, cultural, and economic ways of being tend to be preferred, even if they are perceived as unjust. Alternatives to this status quo tend to be disparaged as troublesome, and inequality spreads. (Jost, 2021; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

As if this were not enough, through system justification socially-dominant groups tend to create, believe in, and manifest for themselves a form of destiny through a process known as **false consciousness**. This only further subjugates other groups into being mere steppingstones to achieving this destiny (ushistory.org, 2025; Indyk & Al Hussein, 2023; Davis, 2016; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Chotiner, 2023). Of course, this “destiny” is little more than a self-fulfilling prophecy. Driven by such narratives, the crime of genocide slowly becomes palatable, if not outright acceptable and necessary, even to populations that have survived and regrouped from a genocide themselves (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007; Bashir & Goldberg, 2018). After all, if God is on one's side, then one can do no wrong.

Closely associated with system justification is the concept of **moral justification**. Put simply, moral justification occurs when “detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it as serving socially worthy or moral purposes” (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001, p. 126). Moral justification and system justification both serve as mechanisms of **moral disengagement**, which is the process whereby a person convinces themselves that normal ethical and moral standards that they would ordinarily ascribe to do not apply to them or the current situation (Bandura, 1999). In this manner, the individual now convinces themselves that the immoral behavior is perfectly acceptable. Moral justification serves as a method of moral disengagement in that it reinterprets immoral conduct as serving the greater good. The most common example is in a case of war in which the heinous act of killing is made

into a righteous act; however, it is worth exploring this in depth to understand how it intersects with DARVO as well as the greater question of slavery. Often, moral justification sounds a lot like, “this is the right thing to do. We’re actually *helping* them by doing this” (Cantu-Pawlik, 2019).

Such moral justification is clearly at play with the “groomer” narrative and the oppression of LGBT+ youth. Consider the chronicle being proffered: “These children, you see, are confused. We must protect them from the violent, transgender sexual predators and by doing so we’re helping them avoid painful, irreversible changes to their bodies that they’ll later regret.” Similar narratives will be familiar to scholars of antebellum America and Jim Crow, as with the claim that by keeping Blacks enslaved and disenfranchised, Whites were actually helping the Black population (Planas, 2023). Moreover, the justifications of traffickers, pedophiles, and predators alike can be framed in this way, especially when considered alongside other mechanisms of moral disengagement such as euphemistic language. Slavery is never explicitly called “slavery,” just as genocide is never called “genocide.” Terms like “the peculiar institution,” “the final solution,” and even “human trafficking” help to minimize and obscure the real nature of what is being discussed. It must be understood that language, and even culture, are mere games wherein the rules can be changed at the whims of those wielding enough influence to shape societal behaviors.

Along with such euphemisms often comes the **diffusion of responsibility**. Also the driving mechanism behind the bystander effect, diffusion of responsibility allows individuals to assign blame for immoral actions that they participate in by blaming authority figures (Cantu-Pawlik, 2019). This is the so-called “Nuremberg defense”: “I was just following orders,” alternatively stated, “my boss told me to do it.” While an individual’s actions may be harmless on their own, at the collective level they become deadly through such diffusion, as the mind’s sense of morality switches off and says “that’s not my problem” (Bandura, 1999). In this same vein one finds the mechanism of misrepresenting injurious consequences, which will be familiar to survivors of and experts on interpersonal violence. Through this particular form of moral disengagement, the mind copes by not admitting to the negative outcomes of one’s own actions (Bandura, 1999). Simply put, “it’s no big deal,” or “I didn’t hurt you that badly” (Cantu-Pawlik, 2019).

While moral disengagement can take many forms, such justification tends to follow a specific pattern in the minds of those undertaking these cognitive gymnastics. In particular, Knoll, Lord, Petersen, and Weigelt 2016 reveals that this process typically occurs in four stages. First the individual undergoing the process of moral justification begins to mentally reconstruct and retell events in a new narrative in which the actions they’re about to take are justified: they cannot be viewed as unethical or immoral. In fact, this first step is a form of moral disengagement in itself, known as “reconstructing conduct,” in which the behavioral actor convinces themselves that the behavior is morally acceptable after having recreated a narrative in which the previously objectionable behavior now serves some moral purpose (Bandura, 1999). One might consider the moral ideal that it’s never acceptable to strike another human being, especially a child or a woman, with which most would readily agree. However, quite a few will make exceptions in the case of corporal punishment or even outright domestic violence if it serves the allegedly moral purpose of “teaching a lesson,” which is actually how a great

many abusers and proponents of hitting small children justify such aggression. They've reconstructed their own conduct in a way that portrays it as serving a moral purpose that they find acceptable.

After this new, much more cognitively-pleasing story is in place, the moralizing individual will move to downplay their own agency or choice in the matter (Knoll, Lord, Petersen, & Weigelt, 2016). They didn't really have a choice, you see. They were just following orders. Circumstances required it, or you yourself forced their hand – *you made them do it*.²⁴ Again, these are just more mechanisms of moral disengagement being used to reinforce the last disengagement, that of the reconstructed conduct (see Fig. 10.6).

After this has been done, the moralizer will simply fail to observe, or will explicitly deny, the consequences of their actions or the results of their own inaction. This is where the gaslighting sets in: they might see the bruises, but it simply won't cognitively register that they actually *caused* them. The many forms this step takes range widely but are no less destructive than the last, from claiming that they never hit their victim to, in other situations, the denial of genocide or of climate change.

Finally, the moralizing personality must change how they perceive the victim of their own actions in order to complete the process of disengagement. This is normally done by degrading the victim or trivializing the effect of the individual's actions on the victim. The victim may be made out to be demonic or animalistic in nature in an attempt to dehumanize them. "She's crazy." "It wasn't even that bad." "You're making a big deal out of it." The similarities of the process of moral disengagement to the ten stages of genocide are certainly worth noting and deserving of future research (see Stanton, 1996; Knoll, Lord, Petersen, & Weigelt, 2016).

Additionally, and much more to the point in question, future research needs to examine the (system justification)-(moral disengagement)-(abuse) nexus, as the implications are truly vast. In case it is not clear to the reader, let me make it crystal: the dynamics behind human trafficking are the exact same dynamics behind child abuse, family/interpersonal violence, sexual assault, societal inequality, genocide, and matters of dictatorship and tyranny. The pimp has more in common with the war criminal than he does with his own family; the wife beater or child molester has more in common with a third-world dictator than his next-door neighbor; the suburban soccer mom who casually argues against DEI initiatives because they don't benefit her child as they do another is more like her cross-burning grandfather than the civil rights leaders she pays so much lip service to whenever she joins a Zoom meeting (see Hope, 2024; Weiss, 2023; Cross, 2023; David, 2023; Ward, 2024; Kendzior, 2024; Ben-Ghiat, 2021).

But good luck getting any of them to admit it.

Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement	Definition
Moral Justification	Portraying violent acts as serving a higher social cause
Euphemistic Language	Using sanitizing terms (e.g. martyrdom operations) so violent acts are seen as mild or benign
Exonerative Comparison	Comparing own acts of violence to extremely heinous or outrageous acts of violence
Displacement of Responsibility	Placing the responsibility for the harm one causes on other groups
Diffusion of Responsibility	Obscuring or minimizing the causal role played in the outcome of violent acts
Ascription of Blame	Blaming the victim of one's action for causing the harm inflicted upon them
Misrepresenting the Harm	Minimizing, distorting or ignoring the harmful impact of one's action
Dehumanization	Removing the human qualities of people/groups and replacing them with evil or demonic qualities

Figure 10.6. (U.S. Army ERDC, 2012) *Mechanisms of moral disengagement*. The DARVO dynamics behind this particular image are worth an encyclopedia unto themselves (Stewartson, 2022).

Thus, one begins to see that those who make accusations of trafficking or grooming

against LGBT persons – accusations that are unmoored from reality, as documented in this chapter – really do, in fact, realize at a subconscious level just how unjust the system is. But rather than accept that reality and do anything to change it, their psyche demands that they project their own internal distress outward and blame the *other* for supposed changes to their beloved status quo, *others* who just happen to be the truest victims of this unjust system. The accusers are, in a real sense, attempting to cope with the perceived stress of their environment. It's just that their coping mechanism happens to involve possibly killing innocent people to satisfy their cognitive dissonance, all while neatly explaining away any crimes that they themselves might have committed but don't want to admit to. And besides, it's so much easier just not having to think about it, isn't it? From here, the true innate narcissism of human beings is revealed by the DARVO dynamic. Every accusation is a confession in which one is always the victim and never the perpetrator. Far from being intentionally malicious, uncaring jerks, these people are just demonstrating fundamental aspects of human nature: intellectual dishonesty, gross cowardice, and *criminal* (and I use that word intentionally) levels of idiocy.

Of course, none of this absolves them of their role in these heinous crimes any more than the aforementioned Nuremberg defense does. Now do not misinterpret me here: understanding a behavior is far different from condoning the behavior. We are, after all, talking about the crime of genocide. I am in no way attempting to excuse atrocities, but merely to *explain* them so that we can stop them and prevent the next Holocaust. To put it in even simpler terms, the findings here simply mean that, for lack of a better term, *assholery* – even genocidal levels of assholery – is rarely as intentional as most assume it to be. However, as we have seen before, one doesn't have to operate with great malice, or even minimal malice, to do great harm. Many such acts are committed because they are the cognitively laziest option available. Once again, we're marching down the road to hell without question as to where we're going, but absolutely damned sure we're on the path we want to be on – with our picnic basket fully packed to boot.

Suddenly, a great deal begins to make sense, and not just as it pertains to human trafficking dynamics. One can see how easily matters are made worse if an individual perceives or is made to perceive, rightly or wrongly, that one has something to lose in the march toward change and equality among their fellows. Thus, we can see even more than before that the problem isn't that people are inherently evil, it's that they are naturally self-interested and thus, sometimes short-sighted when it comes to the needs of others. While evil may in fact be banal, it is also remarkably, almost *unspeakably*, stupid and lazy.

Consider the name, “The Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism,” widely known by its acronym FAIR. Such an organization surely stands against intolerance and racism: after all, it says so right there in the name! One would imagine that the Foundation believes it is important to know the true, brutal nature of antebellum slavery and the horrors that Black Americans endured from that period on into Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, the struggle for civil rights, and into the present era of mass incarceration and police violence. One would suspect that such mistreatment would be decried as the epitome of intolerance, the ultimate sin of what happens when bias and prejudice is allowed to run unchecked, segregating one dominant social group from another: *the other*.

Indeed, one would absolutely *not* suspect that such an organization would claim that

the teaching of undisputed facts and history to children in an age-appropriate manner amounted to “ideological indoctrination.” In fact, it would boggle the mind that such an organization would argue that Black children were strong enough to survive the atrocities of the plantation, but that White children are too sensitive to so much as even learn about such legacies in American K-12 educational system. It would be further worthy of being committed to a mental health facility to argue that, hey, White people are the real victims here – after all, such teachings are racist and intolerant of White people. People talking about racism and bringing attention to it are the *real* racists. Yet these are exactly the views that are promoted by this intentionally misnamed organization.

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

On Witch Hunts, Radicalization, and Historical Perspectives

The DARVO phenomenon explains not only modern political dynamics but historical trends as well, and the core relationship the DARVO dynamic has with fascist politics.

Imagine that a group of pre-industrial agriculturalists is having a particularly bad harvest. Crops are failing to grow, the weather is bleak, and *something* is killing what few livestock remain. This is, of course, for a myriad of utterly banal reasons. For one, the soil where the seeds were planted is acidic, with the settlers having been told to plant there as something of a joke by the natives. The aboriginals honestly didn’t think that they’d take the advice seriously – the soil was obviously barren – but now that it had happened it’s a wee bit late to walk back the overbearing sarcasm that somehow didn’t quite clear the language barrier. The weather has been unusually cool and rainy to boot, as New England summers are sometimes prone to be, and those plants that did grow in the bad soil either haven’t had the proper sunlight or have been washed out.

Joe, tired after a long day of manual labor, left the chicken coop unlocked one night and a pair of raccoons got in. The next morning Joe awoke to a bloodbath, not even realizing that he had been the one to leave the coop door wide open. Bob was supposed to be guarding the sheep late at night but fell asleep in the middle of his shift, and the wolf who happened by politely decided to let him rest while he helped himself to a snack. Bob awoke to find the mangled corpse of a lamb before him – the wolf not wanting Bob to go hungry, of course, since he had noticed that the fledgling colony had fallen on hard times and he pitied Bob. But when confronted about what had happened, Bob mysteriously couldn’t remember the events of that night. It was as if something, or someone, had strangely affected his memory or had put him into a trance.

Such mysterious events, especially when combined with a lack of nourishment, increased stress, and perceived existential threats, can give rise to paranoia. It’s clearly not the colonists’ fault that things are going so badly. They’re doing everything they’re supposed to! It’s almost as if they are being attacked by some outside force – a force that wants them to fail, suffer, and die. What malevolent force would oppose such noble and pious people? It’s not long before the community’s suspicions turn to Mary, an old widow who lives on her own outside of the group’s territory. Interestingly, Mary always seems to have enough food, and she makes frequent trips into the woods alone. Of course, it doesn’t cross anyone’s mind that these two phenomena might be related, that she might go to trade with the natives, or that she merely forages to supplement her diet. Rather, it is the psychodynamics of fear and jealousy of her perceived success that drive

the accusations that are soon leveled against her: she has been consorting with Satan in the woods and is a *witch*.

To the panicked masses, the accusations might seem shocking at first, but they soon begin to make a lot of sense. There have been a lot of bad things going on after all, and the hand of the devil surely would explain things. A witch being the culprit might seem unlikely to some; they've never seen one before. Then again, stranger things have happened, and they've been told of the existence of witches by those in power and those they listen to, much as many have heard of pedophiles bathing themselves in adrenochrome. What's more, all their friends, family, and neighbors believe in witches. When Tim initially expressed doubt that Mary was a witch, concerns were immediately raised as to whether Tim had also been cavorting with the dark lord. This, of course, caused Tim to also denounce Mary and renew his commitment to the faith, having been saved from Mary's temptation.

Suddenly, all of the townspeople's worst fears and innermost guilts are projected onto Mary. She had obviously caused the crops to fail and the weather to sour through her satanic ways. Joe accuses Mary of murdering his chickens, and her denials and pleas as to why in the world she would do such a thing when she herself relied upon their eggs fall on deaf ears, for this is not a time of reason but a time of grievance. Bob joins in, accusing Mary of bewitching him and sending an imp to slaughter his lamb. Others pile on, airing their own grievances now that the floodgates have been opened. A teenaged girl accuses Mary of being a Succubus and having defiled her in her sleep and impregnated her with the devil's child, despite knowing full well it was her own father, but whom she fears. Mary is soon the cause of everything from toe fungus to world wars. One woman even accuses her of having a vile miasma, causing her husband to wear a cursed mask to care for her in a neighborly fashion one day and giving her chlamydia upon his return. In a last desperate attempt to save herself from a painful death, Mary accuses others in nearby villages of being co-conspirators. However, her actions only ensure that the terror will spread, for we all know how this story ends, don't we?

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

We can thus see the true danger of the victors writing the history. Their descendants go on to explain that it is the witches we must continue to fear and not the very people who burned them at the stake: their own ancestors. The witches, after all, are dead, killed and burned alive by the morally virtuous, God-fearing folk who killed them because of ... well, natural circumstances that they misinterpreted. Whoopsies. Additionally, I mean, it's not like the witches are around anymore to tell their side of the story or to share their wicked beliefs and ideologies, if such beliefs and ideologies ever existed at all. *They're dead*. That's a pretty damned good way of removing witnesses to such an oversight. Thus, whatever story the people with the tiki torches want to tell becomes the official story of what happened, without question. After all, no one is around to challenge their version of events, and so no one has to own up to any mistakes that might have been made.

Even if someone is intelligent and self-reflective enough to realize exactly what has gone on, no one else is going to be inclined to believe them. It is, cognitively at least, much easier to accept the narrative that the threat has been vanquished. Good has triumphed over evil until *next time*, and everyone can get back to their normal lives. After all, it's not as if the ordinary folk who stood by and watched terrified as the events

unfolded could have done anything. Everything was out of their control. What could they have done? Stood up and said that the accusations were silly, risking also being accused? Of course not. It wasn't as if they lit the fires or heated the ovens themselves. Their hands were perfectly clean of blood. Besides, it's all so much easier to put the matter behind them and let sleeping dogs lie. If their children ask questions about what happened, they'll simply explain that it was all a long time ago and that they needn't worry themselves about it. No good can come from dredging up the past, anyway – that's why they call it the past! Moreover, they did it *for the children*.

QAnon Radicalization Pathway

Followers of "Q" or "QAnon" on social media display all the classic primary markers of online radicalization leading towards violent extremism, as exhibited by such groups as ISIS

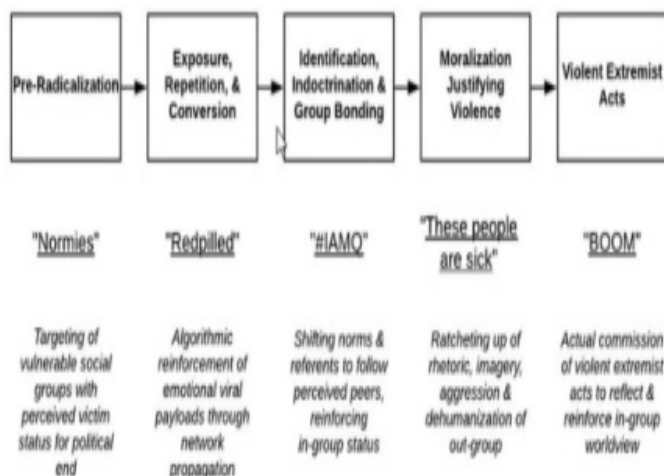


Figure 10.7. (Stewartson, 2022) *QAnon Radicalization Pathway*. This image was posted by an unknown author in 2018 just two months after operatives of Peter Thiel's MAGA3X political action committee, in full coordination with and in support of Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Michael Flynn, began posting on 4Chan under the pseudonym "Q." (Rowley, 2022; Rondeaux, 2021; Mogensen, 2020; Sommer, 2023; Stewartson, 2022; Stewartson, 2022a; Abramson, 2023; Zarnowski, 2023; Gilson, 2017; Hosenball, 2014; Stewartson, 2024a; Feidt, 2023; Stewartson, 2024f; Prophet, 2024; Hayden, 2023; Homans, 2017. see also Yakovleva, 2014; Doyle, 2024; Gilbert, 2021; Gilbert, 2024; Craig, 2022; Smith, 2022.) Additional research needs to be conducted on the potential recruitment and use of child soldiers by extremist elements discussed in Craig, 2022 and Smith, 2022 per multiple confidential sources – the funding of which leads back to none other than former Lt. Gen. Flynn (Minkin & Beckel, 2024).

The crucial point is this: with such a radicalization pathway in place, is it really any

surprise that history repeats itself time and time again while human civilization seems to be plagued by the same old problems? As revealed in Fig. 10.7 and further documented in Fig. 10.6, Links 10.3-10.4, and Fig. 10.10, entire populations can be driven to commit atrocities through carefully managed and staged processes of manipulation, dehumanization, and traumatization as we just discussed. The connection to ISIS radicalization mentioned in Fig. 10.7 is particularly important to understand in this context, as is the timeline of events. To understand this connection one merely needs to consider who served as the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) while ISIS was ramping up from a rag-tag militia to the full-blown horror of narrative warfare that it would become (Maan & Hassen, 2023; Department of Defense, 2012; Milne, 2015; Krishnamoorthi, 2017; see also Human Rights Council, 2016). Likewise, the same radicalization patterns were used in the sexist Gamergate campaign which resulted in a radicalized individual attacking the spouse of Rep. Nancy Pelosi with a hammer (Grayson, 2016; Braithwaite, 2016; Mortensen & Sihvonen, 2020; Wagner, 2014; Owen, 2023a).

Psychologically speaking, we can see something else that is incredibly important to understand in this context: social conservatism is the default position, kept in place by numerous cognitive processes. It is, after all, the least cognitively demanding position to take (see Kahneman, 2013; Azarian, 2018; Azarian, 2023; Hood, 2022; Ellwood, 2022; Danesi, 2023; Wehner, 2023; Newman, et al., 2020; Friedman, 2018; Jost, 2021). Society, it seems, is built to favor the innately self-destructive and outright genocidal tendencies of the witch burners rather than the non-aggressive witches. After all, heretics are much more likely to be burned at the stake – figurately or quite frighteningly literally – than to have their ideas be taken seriously, as doing so would require challenging the sacred status quo that must be preserved at all costs. At a population level, and if allowed to go on for long enough, a snowball effect can occur wherein our worst impulses become *maladaptive traits* for the species as a whole.

Now, it's important to understand that this is a value-neutral statement: it is neither morally right nor morally wrong to hold socially conservative views, views that will vary with one's culture and norms. What is socially conservative in Tehran is obviously different than what is socially conservative in Toronto, and what was considered socially conservative in Tehran before the Iranian Revolution might not be considered such after the Ayatollah came to power. Norms, and thus morality, are relative. Much more to the point, people's sense of morality is not as rigid as they believe, and it can be directly manipulated with ridiculous simplicity and ease (Phillips & Shaw, 2014; Asch, 1956; Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973; Milgram, 1963).

As we have seen, there is a strong human bias towards maintaining the status quo, whatever that status quo may be at a certain place and time. In some cases this bias is undeniably a good thing, such as in upholding a culture's incest taboos. Even the most libertine reformer would not suggest that we do away with such a notion when it comes to the question of how to address the modern slave trade. A problem arises, however, when we become locked into protecting that bias toward the current state of affairs at all costs, especially when it becomes a detriment to our collective survival and advancement, as a society and even as a species.²⁵

Such adherence to outdated stereotypes, societal models, and a mythologized past raises a curious question: just whose heritage is the Heritage Foundation so concerned

with? In fact, the organization's name sounds suspiciously like the coded, thinly-veiled dog-whistle of "heritage, not hate" that one hears from white supremacists waving the Confederate flag. But I'm sure the founders of Heritage never said anything that would betray such bigoted sympathies – *and most certainly would not do so on a routine basis*. Thus, this isn't just some idle thought, but rather something worth examining more closely.

Are they concerned with the heritage of people who are Black? Native American? Hispanic or Asian, maybe? Arabs, or maybe Jews? Or are the people they are concerned with predominantly White? Ah, I see... that's quite telling, but we're not done yet.

Now, are they representing or funded by impoverished Whites? Are they advocating policies that will put poor whites living in trailer parks into more comfortable, more affordable housing? Are they looking to raise these Whites' standards of living? Are they concerned with those making under \$55,000, as the proposals discussed in our previous section on poverty would help the most? Or do their policies tend to favor those who are making substantially more than that? Oh, I see. In fact, that's even more revealing.

Of course, it doesn't even bear mentioning how they feel about men versus women, feminism versus traditional gender norms, or the LGBT+ community, as that's quite literally how we got to this examination in the first place.

Thus, we can quite plainly see that such organizations represent the entrenched elite among society: the rich, white, exclusively cisgender and heterosexual patriarchs. The nobility, the landed gentry, *the plantation owners*. Those who innately benefit from having the status quo remain the status quo. When were such people *ever* on the right side of issues pertaining to slavery or genocide, and not actually the ones doing the enslaving, raping, or slaughtering? Thus, the problem with predominant narratives of human trafficking (and those advancing them) becomes clear: they don't serve the *trafficked*, but rather the *traffickers*.

Financial Intelligence and the Laundering of Funds – and Reputations

A critical connection must be made here, and that involves the role of financial intelligence in human trafficking investigations. **Financial intelligence**, or FININT, is simply the act of collecting and analyzing financial information about entities of interest. Key to financial intelligence in human trafficking is the activity of **money laundering**. Money laundering is the process of concealing the origins, typically illegal, of money through stages of placement, layering and integration. Remembering that trafficking is a financial crime motivated by greed that is often assisted by technology (Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021), it is important to note that the finances of these exploitative rings are complex, and revenue streams are often intertwined with other illicit profit methods. For instance, the defrauding and identity theft of trafficking victims is quite common, as their identities will be used to open accounts and lines of credit that their traffickers will subsequently abuse, sticking their victim with the bill. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, a great many Asian massage parlors, or AMPs, that were involved in sex trafficking schemes were found to also be involved in defrauding the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). In the author's experience, tax evasion is another incredibly common offense that traffickers engage in along with their crimes against persons.

This provides investigators with a tool that can make ordinarily difficult human

trafficking cases relatively easy to prosecute. Traditional prosecutions of trafficking are complicated by the need to compel victims to testify. Victim testimony is often the only way to prove force, fraud, or coercion. Of course, victims may not *want* to testify for any number of reasons. They may fear retaliation, or testifying may cause them undue hardship (in the case of foreign victims, the survivor may be required to stay in the U.S. but not allowed to work), or they may simply be reluctant because the court and investigative process is horribly retraumatizing. Imagine reliving every bad thing that's ever happened to you multiple times to multiple people who are either not sympathetic or who may not even believe you, and then, once you get to court, opposing counsel does everything possible to undermine your story, including claiming that you made it all up. This is the reality that survivors face when they come forward, and it's a significant reason why more traffickers aren't prosecuted. The system is simply so brutal to the victims of this heinous crime that perpetrators know they'll never be held accountable for their actions.

However, these issues aren't present when prosecuting a financial crime. The evidence then is the money trail, hence the importance of understanding money laundering. Money laundering is defined in 18 U.S.C. § 1956:

"Whoever, knowing that the property involved in a financial transaction represents the proceeds of some form of unlawful activity, conducts or attempts to conduct such a financial transaction which in fact involves the proceeds of specified unlawful activity—

(A)

(i) with the intent to promote the carrying on of specified unlawful activity; or

(ii) with intent to engage in conduct constituting a violation of section 7201 or 7206 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; or

(B) knowing that the transaction is designed in whole or in part—

(i) to conceal or disguise the nature, the location, the source, the ownership, or the control of the proceeds of specified unlawful activity; or

(ii) to avoid a transaction reporting requirement under State or Federal law,

shall be sentenced to a fine of not more than \$500,000 or twice the value of the property involved in the transaction, whichever is greater, or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both."

This is a complicated definition, so allow me to break it down. Suppose I steal a bike. That is an act of theft on its own, but suppose I then proceed to sell the stolen bike to make a profit. That profit constitutes the proceeds of the crime of theft. If I then deposit this income in a bank, I am trying to conceal or disguise the source of those criminal proceeds. If I'm arrested and searched, the cash I received in exchange for the ill-gotten bike is evidence of the original crime. Thus, my actions constitute an additional offense: that of laundering the funds. Subsequently, I can be fined up to \$500,000 and/or sent to prison for up to twenty years for this additional offense.

The implications are clear. Assume that one has a trafficking victim (a sex trafficking victim in this case) who does not want to testify in court. This victim has been forced/

coerced into prostitution, with the proceeds being used to fund her pimp's lavish lifestyle. It is a comparatively simple matter to trace the funds to the trafficker, and such investigations can and do often reveal other victims as well as entire rings of perpetrators. Once this is done, the survivor should be given immunity (because we don't want to prosecute victims, right? *Right?*) in exchange for a written statement as to the source of the funds: not necessarily sex trafficking, but rather simple prostitution. It's important to note that this method sidesteps the need to prove coercion that is present in the TVPA's criminal definition of trafficking. From here, those involved in the laundering (the pimp, and anyone else involved as a perpetrator) can be charged with money laundering and sentenced to up to twenty years in prison *per charge*. The same process can be used for any other form of trafficking in which criminal proceeds are gained. In labor trafficking, the perpetrator keeps the profit from the exploitation of the victim's labor, while in organ trafficking the profits come from the sale of the victim's organs.

The money laundering statute is a critically important tool given the large profits that trafficking can generate. In fact, the profit from trafficking a single female victim can easily top \$200,000 (source redacted). There are a variety of red flags that indicate human trafficking from a financial intelligence perspective, should the reader choose to pursue this area of inquiry.²⁶ However, it is worth noting that it is important for investigators to be able to differentiate between those who are being sex trafficked and those who may be mere sex workers or engaging in consensual prostitution.²⁷

However, the connection between money laundering and human trafficking extends even further. Charities and similar organizations can and frequently are used to wash funds for purposes that are often in explicit contradiction to the organization's mission. This is of particular importance in counter-terrorist financing (CTF) given the relationship between terrorist organizations and human trafficking.

Keeping this in mind, many would be shocked at what non-profit organizations spend their time and money on. After a particularly grueling and graphic child exploitation investigation that ended in late February of 2023, I returned from a much-needed mental health break to learn that my organization was being restructured. Everyone was getting new positions starting immediately. I was to go from directing a highly effective and dedicated all-volunteer task force specializing in open-source intelligence that had not only successfully identified vast transnational trafficking networks but had also brought to justice at least one fugitive on the FBI's top ten most wanted list, to ... a vague-sounding position responsible for mitigating risk for large financial institutions. It's important to understand that I had no experience in finance or risk management at that time; in fact, I couldn't even explain what "risk" really was. However, we were assured by senior leadership that it was all well and good, and that this was a positive development that also carried with it the promise of pay in a few months.

Thus began a long period of inactivity. I finally took another position as a social worker to pay the bills despite being advised against it since a salary, I was once again told, was coming in just a few more months. More important was the fact that I wasn't really doing anything in my fancy new position. Whereas I had previously been identifying traffickers and the trafficked on a daily basis and leading organized teams that also did so on a much larger scale, scarcely any new intelligence was now being sent my way for analysis. I believe my total workload during this intermission consisted of

writing one article that was never published. Others also noticed irregularities in the behavior of the leadership and the functioning of the organization, and we all collectively confided in one another as to our frustrations. I began to fear that I needed to resign my position as the organization drifted; meanwhile, the organization's coffers overflowed.

Then one day I got online to join what was effectively the "officers' chat," and was promptly invited to a video conference. I learned that those leaders who were already present weren't actively working on any trafficking cases; in fact, they were no longer doing anything remotely related to human trafficking at all. They were instead hunting Hamas operatives and feeding the information to Mossad.

The date was October 8, 2023.

To be clear, bringing to justice those responsible for the massacre in Israel the day prior was and is a noble endeavor in my eyes, even if there wasn't what one could rationally call a ceasefire in place on the day in question. (See Muaddi, 2023, paying particular attention to the date of publication.) But I was still shocked by this turn of events as such actions were clearly not in the organization's mandate. An argument could be made that locating the missing hostages was relevant, but the conversation made it clear that that wasn't even a secondary objective to the "hunt" at hand. Our expensive systems and donated resources weren't being used for their intended purposes. We were supposed to be an organization dedicated to uplifting the vulnerable and the powerless through our application of a special set of skills. Instead, we were literally involved in the waging of war. I declined to participate in the activities despite being invited, and given the scope of the atrocities that followed (and that the intelligence my organization provided to Mossad directly produced), I am grateful for my choice that day. Even more developments soon unfolded as to the senior leadership's questionable decisions and our allocation of resources, and my resignation quickly followed.

As you may surmise, the much-promised pay never materialized. I was fine, as I had taken the aforementioned social work gig. But some people were considerably less fortunate – including some trafficking and domestic violence survivors.

Moreover, generous donations can also be used as a form of **reputation laundering**, wherein a person or organization performs highly visible actions meant to enhance their reputation while simultaneously obscuring less than respectable actions. It is a form of virtue signaling, a mere public relations maneuver. Donations to non-profit organizations are tax-deductible, providing an incentive for wealthy individuals or organizations to engage in such virtue signaling. This same loophole can also be used to wash funds or otherwise illegally profit: a donor can *place* funds into a charitable organization which *layers* the funds and the donor can personally write off the expense as a tax break only to *integrate* the funds as a legitimate source of income by getting themselves nominated to a well-paid position in the charity in return for this "generosity" (see Alexander, 2022). Similarly, one can "donate" to an organization and then, while sitting in a position of authority for the organization, such as on the board of directors, direct the funds to be used to influence ideology and even policy that is beneficial to one's own for-profit business interests – such as in the case of our old friend, Jon Lonsdale of Palantir fame (see Chapter 8) and the anti-sex trafficking organization Thorn (Lonsdale; see also Bazelon, 2015 for additional insight). Sometimes, these scenarios happen all at once.

Reviewing organizations' donor histories should be a priority to identify sources of

funds and potential corruption: for instance, it's certainly not as if the porn industry would bribe the very "watchdog" nonprofit organizations who are supposed to keep them from exploiting people in sex trafficking rings in an effort to buy off these noble vanguards, right? (See Andersen, 2021 for a case study in how this works among environmental organizations; see Appendix 2 to go on a hunting safari.) The same pattern holds for donors who might want to exploit laborers, children being housed at orphanages and schools, or women living in shelters. One quickly finds that there is a reason that donor lists are confidential, and it has nothing to do with protecting the privacy of good Samaritans.

In case the significance of all this is not yet clear, allow me to further clarify: movements are ideally led by those that have the most lived subject matter experience, but many players in the anti-trafficking "movement" aren't led by survivor leaders *at all*. Rather, they are led by highly compensated executives wearing fancy suits who are fundamentally the least qualified and the least affected by the slave trade. Thus, it should surprise no one that the narratives we have examined in this chapter are all about making as much money as possible off of the trafficked while scaring the public into donating as much as possible and while never actually doing anything to fix the problems (Sirait & Rangkuti, 2023; Moore, 2023a; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development; see also Appendix 2).²⁸ In the end, organizations such as those discussed here that claim to be fighting trafficking are really only engaged in a scam – *a gift* – to make as much money as possible off the most vulnerable. This in turn fits into a much larger pattern. In fact, a great part of the reason the world still has to contend with these issues is that people with the knowledge, expertise, and solutions to the problems have been incapacitated while those who excel at predation have risen to the top. The cooperation that defined early human societies is gone, replaced by competition. It's almost as if, in full alignment with the dynamics of DARVO, the "antitrafficking" effort has been hijacked to launder a different agenda, not at all like that of the collective liberation envisioned by the original abolitionist cause.

As a case in point, at the time of this writing, for just \$35 you, too, can virtue-signal your participation in the "antitrafficking" gift with a nifty t-shirt being hawked by a particular antitrafficking organization. Sadly, though, the person shown in the organization's video promoting the shirts is also a member of their core team and has been quite outspoken in spreading rape culture myths about "vindictive" women who make "false allegations" against their abusers (Zarnowski, 2024). To understand this bizarre dynamic it is important to recognize that there is a strong correlation between engaging in DARVO behavior and the acceptance of rape myths (Harsey, Adams-Clark, & Freyd, 2024).

How to Make a Killing

As we have seen, there are strong connections among poverty, vulnerabilities, the oppression that creates these vulnerabilities, the political use of DARVO, and the human trafficking that results. Additionally, we have examined how push and pull factors can produce migratory events that set the stage for trafficking to occur. One of these push/pull factors is intimately tied to politics: that factor is war.

When Hamas – fully funded and supported by the totalitarian regimes of Iran and Russia – launched a bloody surprise assault into Israel in October of 2023, many liberals

and even self-proclaimed human rights advocates not only condoned the attack, but outright celebrated it, even though the attack was initially largely reported as not having been aimed at proper military targets but at innocent Israeli citizens and international bystanders (Tress, 2023).²⁹ Feminists justified the alleged³⁰ rape of women because of “colonialism,” while children’s advocates ignored the abduction of children as hostages and human shields all while arguing that since Israelis merely had their throats slit, they weren’t *really* beheaded³¹, and that it was additionally racist to say otherwise. Similarly, the rape and murder of hundreds of people at a music festival that was overrun and massacred by Hamas was not only excused but *justified* under the banner that “one cannot tell an oppressed people how to resist their oppression” – as if Hamas was somehow representative of the Palestinian cause (Leibovitz, 2023; Petrzela, 2023; Hinsliff, 2023).³²

In a similar vein, people who had ignored the genocides in Ukraine and Syria at the hands of Russian invaders suddenly found Israeli use of white phosphorus against civilian targets “shocking” – all while others suddenly defended the war crime (even though the videos were from March 2023, and showed *Ukrainian* cities being shelled with *Russian* white phosphorus).³³

Rather than adapt to the situation and to the plainly obvious fact that there were bad actors on both sides of the conflict, individuals commenting on events halfway around the world, while remaining safe and secure in America, doubled down on their beliefs. They became adamant about defending their pre-established worldviews, thereby insulating themselves from the cognitive dissonance caused by seeing so much horror and realizing that they were no longer rooting for the good guys because there were no good guys or bad guys, just *people*. Their intransigence only further linked Hamas’ actions to the Palestinian cause, thereby promoting the very narrative that justified retaliatory atrocities against the population they claimed to be supporting (much like human trafficking “advocates” marginalize the LGBT+ population through the use of the “groomer” slur) in this case pouring jet fuel on what was already Netanyahu’s blazing Reichstag fire.³⁴ All of this, simply because it was the cognitive path of least resistance.³⁵

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

Evil is truly stupid.

Jake Tapper: Is there a way for Israel to destroy Hamas without causing massive casualties against the innocent people of the Gaza strip and roughly a million of them are children?

Marco Rubio: I don't think Israel can be expected to co-exist or find some diplomatic offramp with these savages. These are people, as you've been reporting that deliberately targeted teenage girls, women and children and the elderly, not just for rape and murder and then dumping their bodies off in the streets of Gaza where the crowds can then defile their lifeless bodies. They're just horrifying things. We don't know the full extent of it yet. There's more to come in the days and weeks ahead. You can't co-exist with that. **They have to be eradicated.**

Figure 10.8. (St. Clair, 2023) *System justification in genocide.* See Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 3(c) Dec. 9, 1948, S. Exec. Doc.

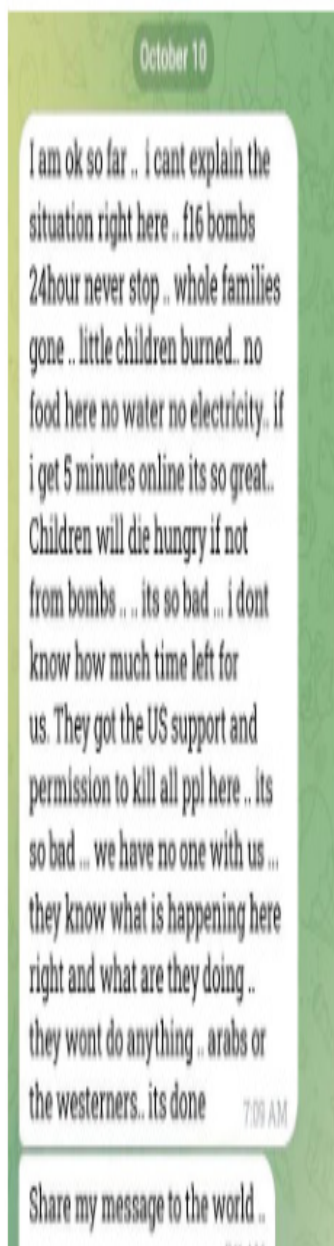


Figure 10.9. (Redacted) *"They have to be eradicated."* "We're in a religious war... level the place." - Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-SC (Graham, 2023).

Here's the point: the facts on the ground didn't matter. In fact, there was a swirl of

disinformation surrounding the incursion from the moment the first rocket was launched (Corse, 2023; Marino, 2023).³⁶ Yet, people didn't engage in healthy skepticism of the claims that were presented without evidence, nor did they even engage in base denialism (that came later). Rather, seemingly *everyone* leapt straight into justification. It was almost as if they were primed – *groomed* even – to readily and almost eagerly accept a genocide of the *other*: no matter who they felt that *other* was (See Rowley, 2022; Zarnowski, 2023; United States Army ERDC, 2012; Stewartson, 2022).

🔗 **Link 10.3.** <https://tinyurl.com/2s5e38u5> (Stewartson, 2023e).

This shows a diagram titled “**How to Make People Kill People,**” reportedly from the book *Introduction to 5GW (The Citizen's Guide to Fifth Generation Warfare)* by Flynn & Cutler, 2022. The diagram shows the following sequence:

Polarization Tribalization Dehumanization Killing

“When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time. People know themselves much better than you do. That's why it's important to stop expecting them to be something other than who they are.”– Maya Angelou

America appears to be well into the fourth phase (see Winter, Antonshchuk, Smith & Radnofsky, 2024; Harrell, 2024; Dodgson, 2023, Doyle, 2024).

While it may seem quite simple to point out that a war crime is a *war crime*, no matter who is committing the atrocity, the errors and pathways of the human mind prevent us from acknowledging such basic facts. Dissecting the roles of projection, system justification, and the dynamics of DARVO in these events, as well as their implications for potential future events, is an interesting exercise left to the reader.

Political Stagecraft

By giving attention to these ridiculous and easily falsified narratives, we completely miss widescale atrocities unfolding before our very eyes. Americans are the all-too-willing audience in a magician's theatre, begging to be entertained while remaining complicit in their own deception (Matthes, Heiss, & van Scharrel, 2023; Pailhès & Kuhn, 2021; Murphy, 1993; Taichibana & Kawabata, 2014).³⁷ It is thus no surprise that such corruption exists in American politics when leadership is reduced to little more than mere sleight-of-hand and misdirection: the politician gives the public what the public wants, while in return the public pays little attention to the hand picking their pocket once distracted. It's much like the consumer being taken in by a contrived marketing war between Popeye's and Burger King over who has the better chicken sandwich – both franchises, of course, being owned by the same parent company. With both options being controlled by a third party, the consumer has only the illusion of choice.

The lesson here is that much of American politics is merely stagecraft (see Kendzior, 2022; Palmer, 2023; for the international geopolitical version of this dynamic, see Link 11.2, Zeevi, 2020; Vardi, 2019; Reuters & Lis, 2023; see also Yle News, 2023 alongside Bisserbe, 2023). From this, one gets the innate sense that American politics and democracy are more akin to “professional” wrestling than to the Olympics, and most Americans can't tell the difference between a corruption scandal and Bob Menendez entering the ring with a folding chair (see Delouya & Valinsky, 2024; Gilens & Page, 2014).

Now, here's a critical point: this phenomenon is fundamentally bipartisan, but that doesn't make it any less *political*. In addition to the Heritage Foundation and the

billionaire white supremacists behind such media organizations as Fox News and the new Twitter, one should also examine the policies enacted by the Clintons, the lovely homes of various MSNBC hosts, or those who the Cicero Institute got to support and implement their policies (Harris, 2022). Do you think they really empathize with the truly vulnerable? The homeless? The *enslaved*? For example, the reader is encouraged to research who provided the policy and analysis for Bill Clinton's Welfare Reform Act as well as which groups this policy harmed the most. Upon doing so, one will find that it's as if there isn't a two-party system in America, but only one party, and one that does nothing to represent the public interest. The tangled, bipartisan web of corruption exposed by the Epstein scandal only serves to reinforce this notion, with vast international and foreign policy implications (Webb, 2022; Webb, 2022a). In a similar vein, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was almost single-handedly responsible for some of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time in regions where the greatest rates of slavery occur, happening not in the shadows of society but right out in the open. But all that many cared about were her emails and some vapid conspiratorial tales about her ritualistically sacrificing infants in order to bathe in their blood (Benjamin & Green, 2016; Benjamin, 2016; Brown, 2016; Riddell & Shapiro, 2015).³⁸

Speaking to this duplicity, author, journalist, and anthropologist Sarah Kendzior revealed the true role of exploitation and gaslighting in our polity when she stated,

Everyone who responded with “But Manchin and Sinema” to the failure of the Dems to pass policy, protect Americans, or honor campaign promises should note the “new” Fetterman. They keep a stable of villains in the wings to torpedo anything good. It was never about two people. One party (GOP) is an abuser; one party (Dem) is an enabler. The abuser cannot carry out its agenda without the enabler ensuring there are no consequences. Within each party, members are largely interchangeable. The enabler is now showing its own abusive nature more overtly.³⁹

As an example on a global scale, let's conduct a thought experiment to see just how big a stumbling block we are up against when it comes to the psychological phenomena discussed in this chapter. Did Communism *really* benefit ordinary Russians or Eastern Europeans under the Soviet Union, or everyday Chinese citizens under the current Communist regime? Or did it merely benefit and concentrate power and control in the hands of a privileged few, leaving the rest subject to forced labor and genocidal purges? I'll tell you what: go ask that question to Kim Jong Un with a straight face, and I'll be sure to send an extraction team to rescue you from the labor camp he sends you and your family to for the next four generations, assuming you aren't executed on the spot, of course.⁴⁰⁻⁴¹

Political stagecraft carries over to what the public *thinks* it knows about human trafficking and the perpetrators of trafficking or child molestation. Somehow, the status quo never *actually* gets challenged, but boy do people buy into the illusion of “yay, I'm helping; I'm a good person and not at all contributing to the problem!”

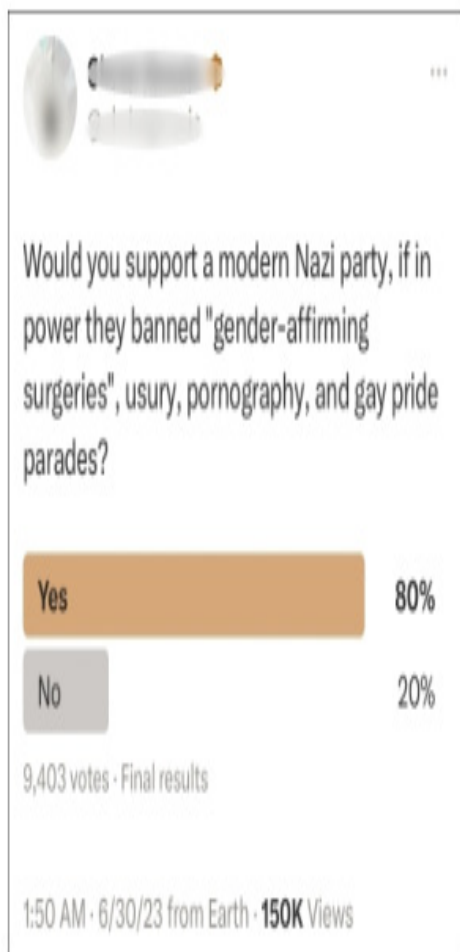



Figure 10.10. (Zarnowski, 2023) *Project 2025*. While Twitter polls are hardly scientific, the wording employed in this one is particularly revealing: DARVO can be used to manipulate public opinion for even more nefarious agendas in a process known as “shifting the Overton Window.” This process consists of using agreeable notions to bring otherwise unthinkable policies into existence – and is nothing short of psychological warfare. *The reader, it must be perfectly understood, is being manipulated.* See Figs. 10.6-10.7, and Link 10.3.

Thus, if we genuinely want to solve the problem of slavery – and given the totality of

the evidence so far, I'm not at all convinced that the general public actually does – then we need to rely on *evidence*, not on unceasing moral panic or ideology. We must be ever vigilant, while being acutely aware that there is a big difference between vigilance and paranoia. The blurring of these is what led us here in the first place.

More importantly, we must be willing to challenge the status quo at all levels, because the status quo is precisely the *cause* of the problem we are tasked with solving. To do otherwise is to merely treat the symptom instead of the underlying disease, something that we've been doing for far too long with little success.

The pattern of political sleight-of-hand turning ostensibly good intentions into bad outcomes is a common one. Recent years have revealed the egocentric self-aggrandizement that lies behind many non-profit organizations and social movements. One is reminded of the anti-bullying movement in particular, with another prime example being that of the *Kony 2012* phenomenon (see Parker, 2012). For the better part of a decade, people of all stripes and backgrounds joined forces to end bullying. Rallies were held. Hashtags trended on social media. Movies and documentaries were made to raise awareness that bullying was actually, you know, a thing that happened in schools. In fact, many movies received great acclaim and made millions of dollars in profit by raising awareness about the problem of bullying (see Moore, 2023a). Yet, of all those millions of dollars spent raising awareness about the problem, precious little – if any at all – went to the actual victims of the bullying, or to preventing future instances of bullying. In fact, after all that awareness raising, bullying still remains a huge problem, much as we saw in the last chapter. Kids are still dying simply because they're *different*. Some contend that the problem is even worse than it was before all the hoopla.

 **Link 10.4.** <https://tinyurl.com/3xerstc9>. In November, 2022 Twitter user @ramzpaul tweeted that Twitter was "nuking pedo accounts" and "eliminating much of Antifa Twitter," to which Elon Musk replied that removing child exploitation would be "priority #1." It would turn out that removing child exploitation was not, in fact, priority #1 (Murray, 2023; Meaker, 2022). What many observers failed to notice at this critical juncture was who Musk was replying to and who was accusing "Antifa twitter" of being "pedo" accounts: Ramzpaul, AKA Paul Rey Ramsey, is a well-known white nationalist with Neo-Nazi sympathies (Terry, 2013). This interaction foreshadowed the direction that Musk would take with Twitter and is another example of a more subtle form of projection being used to shift the Overton Window (Ingram, 2024). See also Ossola, 2024. Recall also how DARVO is one of the covert forms of incitement to genocide (Benesch, 2008; Benesch, 2014).

In fact, one of the biggest criticisms of the largest blockbuster movies on the topic was that was that they presented the problem as being without solution when the solution was clearly to stop parents from teaching their kids to hate other kids (Ebert, 2012) and to address racism. Racism of the sort that, you know, takes the form of narratives of traffickers being all Mexican or Colombian drug lords who break into suburban homes to kidnap White children of *perfect* White parents and then viciously sex traffic them on a remote island until a heroic, similarly White law enforcement agent (who would never, ever do anything inappropriate like sexually harass or even *traffic* women under the guise of helping children) singlehandedly takes down the entire Central/South American Cartel, because after all, *if it raises awareness about the problem, then what's the harm in stretching the truth a little?*

Now of course, by pointing out the actors who politicize this problem for their own gain and benefit, I will of course be accused of even further politicizing a supposedly apolitical issue. It's the perfect catch-22, and another time-honored instance of DARVO being deployed in the public sphere.

"Let's not make this about politics," I will surely be told. Let's not make this about race; let's not make this about gender; let's not make this about income inequality; let's not make this about identity politics. Bad actors come in all shapes and forms; let's keep the focus on them and leave politics out of this.

But as we have seen, *slavery is innately political*.⁴² One need only consider the calculus behind the State Department's and International Labour Organization's estimates to see this fact. Much to this point is the fact that every time someone mentions the disparities that exist among trafficked and abused populations or points out patterns among those who prey upon them, someone in the anti-trafficking community throws a temper tantrum, demanding that we not make this political.

Typically, this person exhibits none of the vulnerabilities or risk factors that we have discussed, nor have they experienced the trauma that such exposure brings, having been sheltered from such experiences their entire lives. In fact, they are, statistically speaking, the *least* likely to experience any form of slavery or exploitation and they tend to benefit the *most* from it continuing to occur. More to the point is the fact that by insisting that we not make it about politics, the problem ironically becomes *all about* politics. It's DARVO sleight of hand: the burden is immediately shifted away from the person who resists examining how they are contributing to and benefit from the problem, and it is placed back upon the victim. This typically ends up sounding like, "How dare you suggest that I'm imperfect and a part of the problem; I'm part of the solution and you should be grateful for my help."

The hypocritical mandate to avoid politics always comes from those who have no problem making the issue political by portraying members of a vulnerable minority group as representative of offender populations, only then to cry, beg, and demand a false and heavily weighted sense of neutrality once the shoe is on the other foot and those with whom they share similarities are put under the microscope. These folks have absolutely no trouble whatsoever hyping a few, insignificant shark attacks as being completely representative of the norm, but the moment one dares to name the overweight, bloviating moo cow who killed the fourth "P" of anti-trafficking, things suddenly and mysteriously become too "political" for them.⁴³

Strange, that.

So-called abolitionists need to do a lot of soul searching about what is *really* handicapping their movement. As we have seen through our study of bias and perception, human motivation is complicated, with introspection nearly impossible. Abolitionists need to rethink who the stakeholders are in the movement, who may have potential conflicts of interest not only at the personal level but at the greater cultural and societal levels, and how this affects who has the most to offer in leadership positions. I say this as there are remarkably many in this movement for whom addressing slavery isn't *really* about addressing slavery at all, but is rather an act of self-gratification through which they convince themselves that they're part of the solution instead of acknowledging all evidence to the contrary. A few strokes to the ego here and there is all it takes to feed their savior complexes, reinforcing all the systemic factors


that benefit them, but which create the problem they claim to be so worried about. Of course, all of this is beyond their comprehension because they don't *want* to see it. Suddenly, it makes a lot of sense as to why we're going nowhere so fast. Moreover, I suspect that such people will be the loudest critics of this work and the proposed solutions within. Odd, that; or perhaps not so much: rather, maybe *another* pattern is emerging. It bears repeating that we need to focus on the patterns and not the exceptions to those patterns.

None of this is to suggest that those who have never been burdened by the shackles of trafficking have nothing to contribute to this fight. Rather, we again find them to be the well-intentioned but irrational nurses in the burn ward: many of these individuals are trying desperately to heal the damage they see but instead are causing further pain by unconsciously moving to protect themselves as well. These people just need to take a step back, become aware of their biases and motivations, and *listen to those they seek to help*. After all, it's a good idea to listen to a patient's complaints before deciding to remove a malignant organ that isn't really so diseased after all. Perhaps this is even more important for the nurses than their patients to realize. The convalescents in this case, at least, tend to recognize that they share a cell with their caregivers, a lesson that precious few of these supposedly enlightened and studied practitioners have grasped (McGhee, 2022; Metzl, 2020).

Then again, if one isn't part of the solution, there is always good money to be made by prolonging the problem, isn't there? (Mull, 2023; Tiffany, 2021; Moore, 2023; Internal Revenue Service, 2015-2021; Rabey, 2022; Brewster, 2023; Rondeaux, 2021). Witness, for example, those who have gained fame and fortune by promulgating such conspiracy theories as the LGBTQ groomer panic.

In the end, the psychosocial realpolitik of the moment becomes evident: No one resists changing the status quo quite like someone who benefits from the status quo remaining exactly the same (Rodriguez, 2020), even when they might admit that it needs to change as a matter of moral principle. The unpleasant reality of the situation, then, is that not everyone who claims to be in this fight is in it for the right reasons, assuming they are really in it at all to begin with. (See Phillips, 2023 and Zarnowski, 2023, and recall the discussion of The Cicero Institute, Judge Glock, and Joe Lonsdale's profit motive. See also Carlson, 2020; Harris, 2022; Hernandez, 2022; Robbins, 2022.) The potential for predators to lurk behind guises of apparent respectability, only to exploit or re-traffic victims, remains all too real a threat.

Politics, after all, is all about power and control (Williams, 2023).

 **Link 10.5.** <https://tinyurl.com/devxf22y> (Kennard, 2022). Chad Loder appears to have found multiple photos showing Chaya Raichik of "Libs of TikTok" as a trespasser on restricted Capitol grounds during the January 6 insurrection. See also Link 10.1, Stewartson, 2024d; Stewartson, 2024e; Singh, 2024; Bartlett, 2022; Owen, 2023; Qamar, 2023; Gilbert, 2022; Schermele, 2023; Cooper, 2023a; Tirrell, 2024.

¹ Consider the elements of DARVO at play in bin Laden, 2002.

² A highly technical, academic term.

³ Luke 14:11.

4 Adapted from Scott, 2020.

5 “Long experience has taught me that people who believe themselves possessed of almost saintlike righteousness are capable of blocking out almost any evidence that contradicts their world view.” – She Who Must Not Be Named

6 “Surely leopards won’t eat MY face,” says woman who voted for Leopards Eating People’s Faces Party (ABC News, 2011).

7 We’ll discuss the ungodly stupidity of this when we talk about crimes against children in the next volume. Stay tuned for *that* horror show. For now, see Wilson & Dickson, 2022.

8 Incidentally, most people who talk about “groomers” can’t even manage to offer this basic skeletal definition, much less the more complicated one that is to follow.

9 Herek also contains a nice description of how QAnon’s blood libel accusations were leveled against Jews in the Middle Ages, not just gays in the 1970s and transgender “groomers” in the 2020s. It’s the exact same shit, just different millennia.

10 The psychological projection and DARVO that is going on here is worth a book unto itself.

11 See Broadway, 2013 for more detail.

12 More to the point, one needs only gender this ideology’s God as she/her to see how quickly they care about pronouns. Wait until they learn about verbs.

13 (StopIGM)

14 Quoted in Papisova & Kheraj, 2017.

15 “It’s offensive that Sarah McBride thinks [she’s] my equal.” – Rep. Nancy Mace, R-SC, quoted in Reed, 2024. I guess it wasn’t about “safety” or “danger” after all.

16 Consider the same dynamic in the saying, “When peace comes, we will perhaps in time be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, but it will be harder for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill their sons” by Golda Meir.

17 The implications for the evolution of and appeal of both capitalism and communism to different groups and persons is worthy of further research.

18 Please consult a genetics textbook on this, particularly the chapter on phenotypes and the expression of sex characteristics. Any edition written in the past hundred or so years will suffice. Elsesser, 2020; Caselles, 2021; Mueller, et al., 2021; Roselli, 2018; Kranz, et al., 2014; and Flint, et al., 2020.

19 Bear witness.

20 Technically, but not really.

21 First they came for the transgenders, and I spoke out immediately even though I was straight and cisgender because I’ve read the rest of the f-ing poem (Zarnowski, 2023).

22 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 3(c) Dec. 9, 1948, S. Exec. Doc.

23 To be blunt, the literature suggests that the system (society/civilization) requires that people *believe* it *works* for it to even *exist*. All of human civilization, in a sense then, is essentially Santa

laus. Of course, if one tells a child who *really* believes in Santa Claus that the man and his reindeer don't actually live at the North Pole and that everything is a lie told to them by their parents who just want them to go to bed on Christmas Eve, they throw a temper-tantrum for the ages as they attempt to reassert control over their world and come to grips with their new reality. The author contends that the same pattern holds in the larger context we are examining.

²⁴ This speaks not only to the interpersonal violence dynamic that many will be familiar with, but much more across the following pages: consider the statement, "Hamas and only Hamas is responsible for the violence that Israel is inflicting upon Gaza."

²⁵ Indeed, it seems we *have* gotten stuck – and not just recently (Graeber & Wengrow, 2023).

²⁶ I am not specifying these red flags here as this is a public-facing book and bad actors may be reading.

²⁷ Again, I am not publishing these descriptors due to the threat of tipping off traffickers, nor do I wish to unintentionally support the "vice squad" approach to targeting free and consenting sex workers.

²⁸ FININT, do your thing: cry "havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war. See Andersen, 2021 in the bibliography for a primer on how reputation-laundering rackets work, while referencing Cassara, 2020 in the Appendix 1 materials for this chapter to understand the investigation of illicit financial flows.

²⁹ I recommend checking the citations in the following chapter, particularly those from Israeli media and Hebrew sources pertaining to the events on October 7. This section of the text is largely about human psychology, perception, reactions, and how this all can be manipulated.

³⁰ There are extensive issues with the way the initial investigations and reporting of alleged sexual violence on October 7, 2023 were conducted, as well as how such alleged acts of sexual violence were then weaponized in service of dehumanizing Palestinian men and the justification of genocide. Indeed, the Israeli intelligence-driven rush to push some of this atrocity *propaganda* before a proper investigation could take place only fueled the atrocity *denial* of those siding with the Palestinian cause, ultimately suppressing the otherwise clear evidence of sexual violence against Israeli women (Izso, Diamond, & Kourdi, 2024; Abdel-Fattah, 2024; Halutz, 2024; Scahill, Grim, & Boguslaw, 2024; Scahill & Grim, 2024; The Short String, 2024; Blumenthal, 2024; Freedom Forward, 2024; see also Stone, 2014). However, what we are concerned with here is the justification of *alleged* crimes, not what *actually* happened on October 7, 2023; the facts matter less than what people merely believed happened and then proceeded to condemn or justify.

³¹ For the record, the author is intimately familiar with the beheading and throat-cutting methods of ISIS, the Taliban, and more: there is no *practical* distinction between the two but rather one of technique. More to the point is that Hamas doesn't traditionally behead people, which should have been a giant red flag that not everything being presented to the public was as claimed (Maad, Audureau, & Forey, 2024; see also Regen, 2002).

³² I am specifically addressing the issue of system justification among the persons presenting this argument, not the larger question of the Israel-Palestinian conflict or the *facts* about what occurred on October 7, 2023 – see footnote 29 above. Gazans attempted extensive and peaceful, non-violent means of redress for their grievances during the 2018-2019 "Great March of Return," only to have it end in catastrophe (OHCHR, 2019; see also Glazer, 2020). Protests continued into 2023 due to abuse, neglect, torture, and deaths of Palestinian prisoners, including women and children, in Israeli prisons – the very same prisoners Hamas demanded to be exchanged for Israeli and foreign hostages taken on October 7 (Georgiades, Unicorn Riot, & Ahmed, 2023). These prisoners were derided as "terrorists" and violent offenders in Israeli propaganda during and following their release despite never having been convicted of, or even charged with, any crime (Shao, Zraick, Patil, & Gupta, 2023). The Abraham Accords only compounded the issue (see Bartov, 2023). Most presenting the narrative discussed here were grossly unaware of these facts, much as those condemning Gazans for backing Hamas seem to ignore what precious little choice the Israeli government left the people of Gaza other than violent resistance. The events of October 7, 2023 were completely and utterly preventable in more ways than the commonly accepted narratives of

vents suggest. Much to the larger point I am making is how slavery and the subjugation of the *other* is at the root of most, if not all, major issues in the world, including armed conflict. The timeline of events detailed in the references and Appendix 1 is of particular importance to any potential investigator looking into how the events of October 7, 2023 came to pass. In particular, the silence surrounding the decades of sexual violence directed towards Palestinians was deafening (Al Mawed, 2022; Defense for Children International – Palestine, 2021; Middle East Monitor, 2023; Baroud, 2023; B'Tselem, 2023; Madar, 2023; N.D., 2018; Pacchiani, 2023; PCATI & OMCT, 2005; Weishut, 2015).

³³ Another video, which as of this writing had one million views, 12,000 retweets, and 21,000 likes on Twitter, depicting what was alleged to show a child surviving the bombing of a hospital in Gaza in October 2023 was actually of a child who had survived the bombing of Aleppo, Syria by Syrian government forces in 2014. It seems that no one cared about the child's suffering until it was politically expedient for them to care.

³⁴ This is a dynamic that merits further research; see Groeneveld, 2024a.

³⁵ "It was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period." (Arendt, 2006)

³⁶ Truth is always the first casualty.

³⁷ The 2016 election was truly the perfection of American democracy: one could vote for a genocidal maniac, a serial rapist of a mob boss who possessed a fifth-grade reading level, a man who didn't know what or where Aleppo was, or a woman who thought Wi-Fi caused cancer. For the record, I voted for the damned meteor.

³⁸ John Podesta, it must be understood, also makes more than a casual appearance in these episodes. See also Robinson, 2017.

³⁹ Kendzior, 2024a.

⁴⁰ From this perspective, Communism is not a solution to Capitalism, nor vice versa. It's a sham, an illusion. *All of it*. We need to start thinking about what comes *after* all this nonsense, not merely rehashing tried and failed policies. To put the problem with Adam Smith's and Karl Marx's theories in context, the two men were handicapped by cultural conditioning. Contrary to popular, oversimplified misconception, the fundamental problem didn't start with the invention of Capitalism or of big-C Communism; by the time Smith and Marx put their ideas to paper, the real damage had already been done (see Marx, 1862). The two allegedly divergent thinkers started from the same cultural framework, hence why their resulting systems so often converge. They were blinded by their cognitive biases (Graeber and Wengrow, 2023: p. 133-135, 148-152).

⁴¹ Moreover, consider the notion of social conservatism in Stalinist Russia or Xi's China. The conservative position is to support the Party, the State – *the status quo*. The socially radical position would be to depose the despots and open things up. Once again, politics and morality are relative.

⁴² When I set out to write this work, I intended to keep it entirely apolitical, saving the politics for a later effort. In fact, I believed the politicalization of the issue was part of the problem. In putting these words to paper, however, the totality of the data was simply so overwhelming that I was forced to change my mind.

⁴³ For those unaware, see *Women Around the World*, 2021; see also Krajewski, 2019; Khimm & Strickler, 2019; Abrams, 2020.

Chapter 11

Lifting the Veil: Ideology, Technology, and Organized Crime

“There is no coming to consciousness without pain.”

– Carl Jung

“War is almost always used to engage in human trafficking.”

– Eric Garland

“None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely

believe they are free.”

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“I am what you made me.”

– Darth Vader,

presumably in an address to the Central Intelligence Agency

This chapter deals with complex topics and geopolitical realities that result in both human trafficking and increased vulnerability to trafficking, such as the push/pull factors described in Chapter 4. Additional details will appear in future volumes, but this chapter provides a preliminary overview. Moreover, highly advanced next-generation technology that has only recently been declassified is also described here. A study of blockchain technologies, with understanding that the derivative cryptocurrency technology can be and often is used as a weapon, would prove beneficial in understanding the technology discussed in this chapter. The fundamental connection between this technology and CSAM, including the blockchain itself, should not be overlooked.

For those who find themselves confused by portions of this chapter, do not be disheartened. During the revisions of this chapter, the editor similarly found himself lost amid the author's attempt to establish a cohesive narrative about many discordant but related phenomena, musing aloud one day that the chapter was as if one were attempting to deconstruct the fibers of a three-dimensional spider web, and all the connections therein, in order to then describe it as a linear structure. It is a fitting analogy to what has been attempted in presenting this material in a linear way, especially if one recalls the discussion on spiders and their webs in Chapter 3 pertaining to the supply chain (see Sokol, 2017). The reader is encouraged to consult the materials referenced for this chapter in Appendix 1 to fully explore the myriad ways these topics interweave and the vast implications for the study of trafficking in persons, knowing in advance that the author is limited by certain non-disclosure agreements as to what he can explicitly state. Despite these limitations, the author is not prohibited from *referencing* publicly available information, nor from providing context to better understand certain information that he may only vaguely highlight. Some might actually think it unfortunate if readers were to consult the cited references, lest a much more vibrant and explicit picture then be revealed.

A concept that may be of use in understanding this chapter is what author Mike Clelland refers to as the **paradox syndrome** (Clelland, 2020, p. 44). While Clelland coined this term in his research on owls and their metaphysical characteristics and we are concerned here about slavery and human civilization, the term is still useful in our analysis. A paradox, roughly defined, is a seemingly preposterous or self-contradictory line of reasoning that may be valid while still seeming unacceptable. A syndrome, of course, is a collection of symptoms, events, or phenomena which consistently occur together, such as in the aptly named "Havana Syndrome." As Clelland explains, "I don't understand how or why, but all the messy threads must tie into some core event, and the challenge is not to get lost in the mayhem." And we have an awful lot of mayhem to wade through before we reach a conclusion that might be difficult for many to fathom.

A significant portion of this chapter concerns the use of **cognitive warfare**, which is warfare that takes place in the human mind. If we understand that the mind is a battlefield, we can then understand why one might want to wage war for "hearts and minds." While cognitive warfare is still poorly defined within the military and intelligence communities, it can be used for ends that result in nothing less than the enslavement of the human mind. For the abolitionist, cognitive warfare poses an additional concern that it does not to the militant or the spy: since the dynamics of modern slavery are much less about physical ties that bind than about psychological

ones, cognitive warfare can and often does fall under the definition of human trafficking described in the early pages of this book, especially once the issue of coercion is considered.

As we conclude this volume, it becomes pertinent to review what we have learned as well as to place that knowledge in the greater context of how the world functions. To do so, we must examine the role not merely of individuals, but of large, coordinated state actors and transnational influences, and explore how these influences advance particular agendas and ideologies through technology, thereby contributing to the problem of modern slavery. Much as we saw in Chapter 5 that the slave trade is intertwined with the abortion debate, we also find that it explains much of the behavior of nation states, religious institutions, and transnational crime syndicates, all of which interact and depend upon one another. Moreover, we'll see how the neuropsychological quirks of the human mind and the behavioral patterns we've identified as central to the existence of slavery are responsible for many other problems facing our species, as well as how these problems (and their potential solutions) are all related.

A Brief Review

From our examination so far one can see that human trafficking arises from inequality, specifically, power imbalances between the trafficked and the trafficker that can take on many forms, be they cultural, social, or psychological – real, or merely perceived. Indeed, it becomes clear that many matters of American political discourse, and even of geopolitics, pertain to some form of slavery: the subjugation of the *other*. Such subjugation is hardly the result of some grand, elaborate conspiracy. Rather, it is simply the end result of errors and biases in human cognition and a relatively small number of unprincipled individuals who take advantage of such limitations. One need only refer back to Fig. 2.4 to see the clear relationship between human perception and slavery.

Thus, to truly address the root of the problem, we must actively work to adjust for the inherent bias (and laziness) projected from our minds onto the world by tackling the unequal design and stratification that is inherent in human culture and societies – and that is by no means a small task. One could even posit that the more unequal the society, the higher the levels of trafficking, and the greater the prevalence of psychological projection and system justification.¹

From here our most immediate goal must become one of shifting focus from the outliers to the trends, reducing the risk of exploitation across the board instead of focusing on specific, high-profile cases that may not represent large populations. We know where a lot of the weaknesses in the system are, and we know how to fix them. In many cases, it's simply a matter of reallocating public resources to mitigate the risk of exploitation and trafficking. The fact that we haven't done so speaks volumes about our nature, our society, and our species. We are telling on ourselves in the worst way, and what we are saying is not at all good.

The Compounding of Risk and Societal Cannibalization

Vulnerabilities and risks compound upon one another, providing insight into the nature of trafficking and the need for triaging cases, assessing risks across entire

populations, and determining how to allocate funding and societal support. A chains-of-risk model provides the best means of accomplishing this. A person of color, for instance, is at far greater risk of experiencing trafficking than a white person. A woman of color, however, is at far greater risk than a man of color. A transgender woman of color suffers an even greater predisposition to experiencing slavery, especially given that she is also far more likely to experience mental illness, substance abuse, and poverty, including homelessness.

Together, these risk factors empower Jörmungandr; they form the critical infrastructure of slavery across the entire globe: not merely a snake, but more like a world-devouring hydra. Thus, the true key to abolition lies in identifying and eliminating these vulnerabilities. Importantly, we must remember that we have the knowledge and the tools to dramatically reduce the susceptibility of people to exploitation and slavery, not just in America, but worldwide. We can mitigate people's risk of falling prey to slavery by ensuring that they have more than the bare minimum needed to exist and by allowing them to thrive as fully equal human beings, if we only will it to happen. Make no mistake, Mjöltnir is within our grasp; we have only but to reach for it. To finally vanquish this vicious world serpent, we must not only understand Jörmungandr in all its complexities, but we must understand ourselves as well – for that is the true art of war.

Key to this objective is understanding that all of these struggles are related and are, in fact, one and the same, as are those responsible for them (Stringwall, 2024n; Davis, 2016; Zarnowski, 2023; Smith, A., 2023; Sweet & Toth, 2023; Gelender, 2023; Short, 2022; Eymond-Laritz; Redbird & Homaniuk, 2023; Durand, 2022; Saric, 2023; Taplin, 2023; Torres, 2023a; Rollins, 2022; Newton, 2024; Reuters, 2024; Daniele, 2004; McCool & Narayanan, 2022; Office of Public Affairs, 2024; Gutmann, 2014; Monteil, 2022; Boyd, 2022; McPhee, 2023; Rod, 2023; Schindler & the XX Committee, 2014; Andersen, 2021; Murdoch, 2021; First Peoples Worldwide, 2020; Tully, Weiser, & Fandos, 2024; Piette, 2023; Strieber, 2023, pp. 73-83, 140-141; Frantzman, 2021; Liveblog, 2024; Nukari, 2023; Parajuli, 2023; Boldyrev, 2023; de Córdoba, 2023; Groeneveld, 2024; Thomas & Dillon, 2003; Garland, 2023; Johal, 2023; Madhani, 2023; Agarwal, 2024; Milne, 2015; Krishnamoorthi, 2017; O'Neil, 2024; Kreps, 2023; Bamford, 2023; Shalev, 2018; Hendrix, 2018; Bamford, 2023a; Richardson, 2022).² The underlying power structures and systems of stratification that uphold notions of racism are the same as those that subjugate and oppress women; these gendered norms then combine to generate wealth inequality and further disproportionately marginalize those who do not identify along the culturally-approved heteronormative gender binary.

To the conspiracists' credit, we do find that it really *is* all connected in the end³ – just not in the way the conspiracists claim it to be. Their beloved heroes, it seems, are in fact the actual villains. It's mind-boggling to consider that many people believe the world is controlled by a secret, cabalistic group of rich people instead of the incredibly well-known rich people whose influence is apparent.



Link 11.1.

r/WhitePeopleTwitter

<https://tinyurl.com/4dbrm4nt>

An exchange about antisemitism between Chaya Raichik and Elon Musk on the social media platform X provided a prime example of DARVO and inspired many comments.



Figure 11.1. *Birds of a feather DARVO together.*

Left (Elia, 2017): Ideologies based on exclusion tend to merge as members of these belief systems find kinship with each other, even if such alliances make little sense to the outsider. *Center*: Much as it's not a demonic cabal but more of an organized crime syndicate, it's less a formal conspiracy than it is an alignment of ideology and mutual interests (see Fig. 11.9; Saric, 2023; Senn, 1990; Davis, 2016). *Right* (Valley, 2024): A neo-Nazi Proud Boy shares something on his phone with a Zionist demonstrator waving an Israeli flag at a Pro-Israel counterdemonstration that both are attending in opposition to a "Free Palestine" rally in Jackson, New Jersey on May 19, 2024 (see Alam, 2009; Massad, 2012).

Link 11.1. <https://tinyurl.com/4dbrm4nt>

It is also worth remembering that it takes many more things to go right in a person's

life for them to experience success than it does for them to go wrong and lead to misery. Traffickers look for and prey upon the slightest sign of weakness, and the innate institutions and hierarchal structures of societies that humans build to protect themselves from perceived threats only contribute to this process. These institutions are enormously difficult to reform, often serving the most predatory aspects of society and merely reinforcing existing standards of power and control due to the extraordinary nature of human bias. Given such an ecosystem, a predator or trafficker only needs to find a single vulnerability in a victim to ruin the rest of the person's life. Nothing happens without a reason, and human behavior is no exception: our true enemy is not the *other*, but is within our own minds. We therefore certainly have our work cut out for us if we seek to abolish slavery because, as we have seen, the pitfalls of the human mind make such beliefs the norm and not the exception.

Fortunately, we know a great deal about how the mind works and how to counteract biases such as tribalism and pareidolia. And we have a new strategy with which to attack the problem: a chains-of-risk model to help us address and ultimately eliminate the underlying vulnerabilities that lead to trafficking. We can greatly reduce individuals' and entire populations' risk of falling victim to human trafficking if we can muster the political will to do so. For this to happen we must confront the fact that our current sociopolitical and economic system is little more than a hoax that enables the powerful to maintain their consolidation of power; it's a house of mirrors designed to perpetuate the illusion that there's some sense to all the nonsense. We have to start asking hard questions about society, civilization, our institutions, and our most cherished beliefs and values because, as we saw in Chapters 9 and 10, they're killing the very people we claim to be so interested in "freeing" and "rescuing."


And they're also killing *us*, the ones supposedly doing the rescuing. At a population level, inequalities in status lead to lower standards of living, higher infant (and mother) mortality, lower life expectancies, increased mental health and substance abuse issues, increased rates of violence and violent crime, and ultimately even deleterious changes in the way natural selection affects our genes (McGhee, 2021; Metzl, 2020; Wright, 2017; Forbes, 2008; Andersen, 2021; Abib-Habib & Frenkel, 2024; Klibanoff, 2023; Bugos, 2023; Graetz, et al., 2024; Graham, 2013; Hugh-Jones & Edwards, 2024). A significant part of the problem is that we are cognitively blind to the horrors that we inflict upon others, all while being intimately aware of the crimes inflicted upon us. To quote Orwell, "everyone believes in the atrocities of the enemy and disbelieves in those of his own side, without ever bothering to examine the evidence." (Orwell, 1942) It is simply all too human to believe that God is on our side and that we are doing good in the world while ignoring our own atrocities, even when they are occurring right before us. We can all see the blood, but it seems to turn to invisible ink when it is on our hands.

More important is the fact that, this part at least, has always been this way, to the point that I imagine it came as quite a surprise to those arriving shackled on slave ships and those trapped on Indigenous reservations that they were living in the alleged "land of the free." Remember, this is America we're talking about: the country with the highest standard of living in the world. If it's really this bad here, then just how bad is it everywhere else?

There is a tendency among certain liberals to believe that the recent glut of problems in America began – and will end – with Donald Trump. Let's put this notion to rest once

and for all: none of this started with Trump.⁴ Trump is merely the latest symptom of the universal disease plaguing us – and, it must be quite clearly stated, he is a tool, as are all politicians, be they on the left or right. Specifically, Trump is a pawn of the very “deep state” powers that he so often expounds against, elevated to power to facilitate CIA shadow policy in the Middle East, specifically against that of Iran (Stringwall, 2024g; Stringwall, 2024i; Stringwall, 2024j; Davis, 2025; Fulbright, 2018; Tirone, 2018; McKenna, 2025; Ravid & Lawler, 2025).

Yet, it didn't start with antebellum slavery either, nor did it start with a Spanish war criminal accidentally meeting the Taino. Rather, the human tendency to subjugate and enslave the *other* has been with us for a long, long time, and it persists through our refusal to deal with it and the delusional lies we tell ourselves about it (Poliakov, 1996; Reneducation, 2024; Morris, 2006, p. 298). It's time that we confront reality for what it is and stop lying to ourselves, for that is the greatest lie and sin of all. And it is a *sin*, make no mistake – it is not just a crime against ourselves and our shared humanity, but against the very universe and truth itself (Alighieri, 1935; Film International, 2012; Worley, 2016; Francis, 2018; Francis, 2019; Ezekiel 16:49-50). This tendency to accept subjugation is nothing less than a psycho-spiritual illness that infects minds like a virus first identified, not by biologist Richard Dawkins in his breakthrough work *The Selfish Gene*, but rather by the Algonquin-speaking tribes of North America who know it as *wetiko* (Link 11.2), better known by its anglicized name, *wendigo*. And as the Algonquin will tell you, it will not stop spreading until it has consumed everything, itself included (Forbes, 2008; Levy, 2022; Ezekiel 5:10).

 **Link 11.2.** (<https://tinyurl.com/mtbwent4>) As reported in *The New Republic* (Aronoff, 2023), Zion Oil and Gas is a company whose founder, John Brown, believes he was "ordained by G-d" to discover oil and gas in Israel. Numerous online publications show splashy superpositions of images of oil derricks, the star of David, the Israeli flag and the U.S. flag. (<https://tinyurl.com/22b46sr8>)

Narrative warfare and system justification are *wetiko*, furthering Jörmungandr in real time. We must be careful not to fall into the deadly mind trap of Antisemitism. The fact that Judaic culture is not immune to the subtle lure of authoritarianism does not excuse the fact that Israel's genocide of Palestinians fits neatly into larger narratives of a self-fulfilling prophecy: a prophecy that arguably scapegoats and prepares Jewish people for another Shoah in ways few have caught on to; a prophecy that has its roots in Eurocentric thought more than anything else (Haaretz Podcast, 2024; Leal, 2024; Hill, 2023; Mayer, 2023; Harb, 2023; Hearst, 2023; Gabbatt, 2023; Howard, 2023; Bump, 2018; The Groundtruth Project, n.d.; Rosenberg, 2022; HadassahMag, 2023; Kirschmaum, 2018; Kahn-Harris, 2019; Pfeffer, 2022; Anonymous, 2023; Bergman & Zeitoun, 2024; Gelender, 2023; Van Wagenen, 2024; The New Arab Staff, 2023; Miller, 2023a; Walker, 2023; Reuters, 2023a; Becker & Scheck, 2023; Bergman & Goldman, 2023). Indeed, it was all quite telling how those who had defended chanters of “Jews will not replace us” as “very fine people” merely exercising their first amendment rights suddenly were concerned about antisemitism and were restricting those same rights on university campuses (Michaelson, 2023; Egan & Judd, 2023; see also McNeill, 2024; Wright, 2024). The racialized characteristics of the conflict, and the nature of Israel as a racial project of Europe and the United States (and not the other way around as antisemites would have us believe) should not be overlooked (Bob, 2022; Saad, 2023; Attiah, 2023; Cineas, 2023; McGreal, 2023; UK Parliament, 1939). Jörmungandr and *wetiko* are universal to human societies, be it the enslavement of Uyghurs in Chinese labor factories, Russian genocide against Ukraine, the crimes of the Taliban and its Pakistani allies in Afghanistan, Israeli apartheid against the Palestinians, or the ruthless, systematic exploitation of the global south. America, simply put, is not exceptional, and no one is as noble as their narratives claim they are. Until we realize this, we will

continue repeating the cycles of self-destruction that brought us to this moment, because in the end, it really is all connected. Again, the timeline of events documented in the references and Appendix 1 is of critical significance to the willing investigator (Piette, 2023; Labott, Starr, & Browne, 2017; Motlagh & Yar, 2019; Corbett, 2023; Middle East Eye, 2023; Rowlatt, 2023; Azran, 2017; Jaffe-Hoffman, 2023; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2019; Travis, 2008; Goldberg, 2023; Samuels & Tibon, 2023; Wrobel, 2023; Saric, 2023; Lakhani, 2023; Ronzheimer & Chiappa, 2023; Al Jazeera, 2023; Scheer, 2023; Cook, 2023; Melman, 2016; Kahena, 2020; Hendrix, 2018; Bamford, 2023a; Sweet & Toth, 2023; Naylor, 2016; Maltz, 2016; Hever, 2015; Cohen, 2023; Kahana, 2023; Liles, 2022; Bates, 2023; Peterson & Cook, 2023; MEE Staff, 2024; Al-Maghafi, 2024; see also Frantzman, 2021).

Again, this is a fundamentally nonpartisan point, but that does not make it apolitical. In fact, it is *deeply* political, as recently exemplified by views expressed about the Syrian war and resulting governmental overthrow. A Syrian colleague of the author's, known prominently for running the @proud_damascene account on Twitter, rendered the following judgment after the fall of the ghastly Assad regime:

"I want to address the left.

You didn't fail Syria. We liberated our country. You failed yourselves. You failed your principles and professed solidarity with the oppressed. At best, you were silent. At worst, you supported a mass-murdering dictator.

We see you. We remember."⁵

As revealed by many of my colleagues in the immediate aftermath of the Assad regime's fall, it was hardly only the "left" that failed in this way. Many on the right also revealed that they had forgotten that Syrians were living, breathing human beings with thoughts and feelings of their own, capable of, and fully entitled to, self-determination and the same rights that other humans enjoy. Instead, Syrians had been dehumanized, reduced to little more than sacrificial pawns in a vast, geopolitical chess game (Adams, 2024b; Adams, 2024d; Archer, 2024a; Archer, 2024b).

From: Jake Sullivan
To: Hillary Clinton
Date: 2012-02-12 09:01
Subject: SPOT REPORT 02/12/11

UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2014-20439 Doc No. C05789138 Date: 10/30/2015

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, JacobJ <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2012 4:01 PM
To:
Subject: Fw:SPOTREPORT02/12/11(SBU)

See last item - AQ is on our side in Syria.

Otherwise, things have basically turned out as expected.

From: OpsAlert
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2012 03:31 PM
Subject: SPOT REPORT 02/12/11 (SBU)

Figure 11.2. (U.S. Department of State, FOIA Library) *"Al-Qaeda is on our side."* As discussed in the last chapter, both political parties in the United States often work in tandem while pretending to be opposed to each other. As Americans became intoxicated with tales of Clinton bathing in babies' blood while child sex trafficking went on unabated in pizza parlors and John Podesta's basement, conservative operatives provided cover for these individuals' very real crimes through the hijacking of the abolitionist movement via the injection of the QAnon narrative (See Department of Defense, 2012; Milne, 2015; Rozbani, 2024; Webb, 2025; Krisnamoorthi, 2017; Human Rights Council, 2016). The role Jake Sullivan played in this disaster, and the origins of the "Sullivan Doctrine," will become clear as Operation Timber Sycamore is revealed later in the chapter and in Appendix 1 materials for this chapter.

The Syrian civil war is worth more than a passing mention given its central role in

the development of the weaponization of migration. Millions of individuals were forced out of their homes and directed to Europe in a ploy to destabilize the continent, and nearly all of these people were trafficked or exploited in some form along the way (Frantzman, 2021; Nukari, 2023). Yet upon its surprisingly swift and bloody conclusion, as Syrians were still uncovering mass graves containing the bodies of literally hundreds of thousands of Assad's victims, the Western media mafia concerned itself with asking the transitional Syrian government whether there would be restrictions on alcohol consumption in the future (when the same media syndicate wasn't otherwise preoccupied with staging seemingly heroic rescues of those directly responsible for the mass graves, of course; Bilal, 2024; Al Jazeera Staff, 2024a). As Christmas trees were decorated among freshly hung Free Syria flags, the bitter, almost seething disappointment of many that Syrian Christians were *not* being slaughtered *en masse* by their Muslim peers was distinctly palpable. It was almost as if thousands of paternalistic voices had suddenly cried out, "Silence, petulant children! Atrocity crimes bore me – look instead at this photo of a woman wearing a hoodie next to al-Jolani and be outraged!"

Much as we saw in the last chapter, it was none other than Western White feminists who proclaimed themselves to be the *real* victims of Assad's barbaric regime (Wu, 2024; see also Barlow, 2024). Meanwhile, as Assad's lieutenants – those most personally and directly responsible for the horrific atrocities that were being discovered – were hunted down and dispatched with justice far kinder than they deserved, videos of the executions were spread by *both Iranian and Western influences alike* with the false narrative that they were merely innocent Christians and Alawite minorities being murdered by intolerant Muslims for their beliefs (Zaino, 2024c). In the background, Palestinians mysteriously and passively "died" while Israelis were actively and brutally "killed" or "massacred" at the hands of savage, barbaric Islamic radicals (Johnson & Ali, 2024; Inceoglu, 2023; Ali, 2023). Meanwhile, in nearby Libya, men, women, and children could be found for sale on auction, nearly a decade and a half after being "liberated" from their oppressor, Muammer Gaddafi.

Most Americans are familiar with Bashar al-Assad as having been responsible for the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people in 2013, crossing the "red line" not so firmly established by the Obama administration. Of course, Assad wasn't responsible for the 2013 incident or the earlier incidents in 2012 (the later 2017 and 2018 incidents were a different story, however). It was, in fact, the Russians who first broke the international prohibition against weapons of mass destruction in Syria, paving the way for Assad to get away with even greater atrocities in future years. While the 2013 sarin attack in Ghouta, Syria received significant attention and coverage, the later attacks occurred with barely any mention by the Western media mafia.

Which sort of explains all the use of similar chemical weapons against Ukrainians after the February 2022 invasion by Russia, none of which the Western media reported on either. Chemical weapons have also been deployed in Gaza by the Israeli Defense Forces since at least 2021 and also in Lebanon in 2024, receiving similar media treatment (Askar, 2025; Abraham, 2025; Mayer, 2024).

This behavioral data grants us one final insight into the problem that we have been tasked to fix: in the end, *this is who we are*. In one breath, we express disdain and even horror at the idea that human trafficking exists, only to in the very next moment

welcome the arrival of literal concentration camps simply because we're tired of hearing, factually or not, about migrants flooding across the border and getting "free stuff" (Matthew 25:41-46). We then convince ourselves that these two stances are not the least bit contradictory, that the issues involved are complete and separate matters altogether, that we are in fact good (and even morally righteous) people, and that the *real* issue is that the migrants that we want to put in said gulags and quite literally enslave as a work force just won't respect our beliefs and agree to get along. "How dare they compare us to Nazis," we say, "those damned Marxists!"

We are the problem, and only we can fix ourselves. But to do so, we first must recognize that there is, in fact, a problem with how we behave toward each other – and we must confront just how bad of a pickle we are in. To this end, it is important not to throw around blame, but to *understand* – we really are all connected in many ways, some of which not obvious but will be detailed in future volumes.⁶

False divisions and unrequited hate are the source of the problem, after all: it's called "divide and conquer" for a reason. Thus, compassion and empathy are the ultimate answer and the way out of this mess, although I would be lying if I told you that certain people didn't need to be stopped and held accountable for their actions – sympathy and understanding are worthless unless accompanied by the pursuit of higher justice. Without such accountability, even those responsible for atrocities can find refuge only to inspire the next generation of monsters.

The New Rome versus the Third Temple

The "New" Rome: Moscow

For many, World War II resulted in the highly public Nuremberg trials, in which many of the highest-ranking Nazi brass were publicly tried and executed for their crimes. But despite all the spectacle, many of the war's worst war criminals were never brought to trial, conveniently escaping accountability for their role in the Reich's crimes. The post-war world, eager to put the horrors of the past behind it and move on with a new "cold" war among the survivors, failed to track down the numerous ideologues committed to the Nazi cause, most of whom were itching for a rematch and a chance to establish a new *Fourth* Reich.

Thus, it's important to understand that the Third Reich did not lose the Second World War as much as it was simply forced underground, away from polite society and what would pass as proper political consideration. Similarly, the Soviet Union did not collapse with the fall of the Berlin Wall as has commonly been accepted, but instead continued its silent process of ideological subversion under the watch of its new KGB overlords (see Curanovic, 2014; Zarnowski, 2023).⁷ Much like the larger serpent we are concerned with in this work, these particular heads of the hydra were able to successfully shed their old skins only with extensive American support, both wittingly and notably less so.

The implications of this are all the more terrifying when one recalls the secret protocol of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (Senn, 1990). By constructing the trope of "godless communism" and casting American Christianity as the absolute good opposed to this absolute evil, American evangelical leaders, with more than a little assistance from the brothers Dulles and a box of paperclips, "offered totalitarianism to guard against totalitarianism" (Aiello, 2005; see also Kinzer, 2014; Jacobsen, 2015; The New



Figure 11.3. (Pohl, 2014) *Russian civil war medal, ca. 1919-1922.*

A significant amount of Nazi German ideology can be traced to Russian mysticism, philosophy, and Slavic migration to Germany (Kellogg, 2008). Such ideological similarities and origins should be considered when examining the Russian DARVO of “Ukronazis” in justifying the genocidal invasion of Ukraine (Joffre, 2022). Likewise, one should remember that the antisemitic blood libel *The Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion* was a Russian publication.

Fast forward to the 1980s when Russian “defector” Yuri Bezmenov told audiences across America *exactly* what he and his KGB buddies had been up to in ideologically infiltrating and subverting America to Russian interests – and *exactly how* they had largely already achieved their objectives by that time. Like Rasputin before him, Bezmenov knew how to make his audiences buy into the illusion he was selling. “Women did not burn their bras in Russia,” he joked, nor did “men dress as women;” *this* was the true demoralization of American society that the KGB was orchestrating, Bezmenov argued. The solution, he claimed, was for them to hold fast to their religious institutions as sources of truth – institutions that had, of course, already been infiltrated by the KGB and were becoming more corrupt by the moment. Russia had no religion, Bezmenov said, and this was its weakness. This was of course a lie. The state *was* God in Soviet Russia, and the Soviet government had repeatedly corrupted and weaponized religious institutions in both Russia and its satellite states to better control the populace (Curanovic, 2014).⁸ Bezmenov’s lie was, of course, also the simplistic narrative that the American government had manufactured about its communistic foes. As American audiences fell victim to the psychological trap Bezmenov laid for them, they unconsciously ignored the simple sleights of hand that were occurring before their own eyes. Like a witness to a mentalist’s amazing magic trick, they suspended their disbelief in the (self-admitted) KGB officer’s statements, allowing themselves to be mesmerized by the performance theatre occurring onstage before them.

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender.

This must be understood as both a maniacal boast as well as a masterstroke of psychological warfare. Bezmenov was simultaneously mocking the gullibility of his audiences all while ensuring the KGB’s final victory by simply telling American Christians what they wanted to hear – Americans who, of course, were already primed to receive this message by the KGB’s American opponents, the CIA. Like the participants in a magicians’ audience, the listeners didn’t want to know how the trick was done. They *wanted* to believe Bezmenov’s message. Thus, they didn’t even question Bezmenov’s assertion that their sacred core beliefs were *the* single most important thing standing in the way of “godless communism” taking over America.⁹ Instead, these individuals’ cognitive dissonance was so strong that they actually *integrated* Bezmenov’s claims into their own worldview. To this day Bezmenov is celebrated as a prophetic champion of both truth™ and freedom among conservative American Christians, especially among white evangelicals: a group that, again perhaps unsurprisingly, identifies with Vladimir Putin’s Russia in increasing numbers despite Russian hostility towards Protestant Christianity (Banks, 2024; Shea, 2024; Pally, 2022; Schaetzel, 2020; Bacca, 2020; note the DARVO dynamics present in Schaetzel, 2020 and Bacca, 2020; see also Marsh, 2024).¹⁰ We should also recall the relationship between traffickers and addictive substances, for it was none other than Marx himself who deemed religion to be the “opiate of the masses” (see Reed, 2023b).

Lest the sheer simplicity and cunning genius of this maneuver be lost, consider this: who else would make a better intelligence asset than the one person – the one lone, trusted soul – that entire communities confess their deepest, darkest secrets to every single week? The potential for *kompromat* is endless.¹¹



Figure 11.4. (Seuss, 1941) *We haven't fallen so much as we never moved on.*

Many Americans believe to this day that the wrong side won World War Two. Fascism did not arrive in America with Trump, it was already here – demoralization was a simple exercise for Bezmenov. The Nazis, and even Hitler himself, drew inspiration for the Reich's ghettos and race laws from the American "reservation" system for Indigenous peoples and Jim Crow.

To be clear, Bezmenov was simply taking advantage of the groundwork that the CIA

and American preachers had laid for him since the beginning of the Cold War, but rather since the nation's founding. The American exceptionalism found in evangelical narratives served Bezmenov well. For believers, America was the promised land, Atlantis, the mythical Eden, a *new Zion*. Reinforcing this claim disengaged any skepticism that his audiences may have initially had about the dirty Commie turncoat. The founding myth of America that had whitewashed the exploitation of so many people was in turn exploited to serve as an active measure against those who had created it in the first place.¹²

Yet, there was a critical similarity between Soviet ideology and what was almost uniquely American Calvinist religious belief, one that any counterintelligence agent looking over Bezmenov with a fine-toothed comb would have missed as they would have simply assumed it as a self-evident truth. What did mainstream American religion and Soviet ideology have in common that was so familiar as to otherwise go unnoticed?

This is worth considering. Under the Soviet regime, enemies of the state were viciously marginalized and silenced through an institutionalized and legitimized system of abuse. The Soviets were masters of DARVO: the State was never responsible for anything that went wrong. Rather, the individual was responsible and was readily denounced by former friends and foes alike. If anyone accused the state or an official of anything, it was surely the individual's fault. Ostracization, exile, public shaming, denouncement by one's former friends, and much worse were the least a Soviet citizen could expect if they went against the power of the state. Ideological dissenters or those who merely displeased leaders were literally "unpersoned."

It was, and is, the same in American churches and religious communities (Child, 2024; see also Child, 2024a).

If the connection is not clear, then consider the following: what would one say if they wanted to silence and otherwise marginalize targets of such systematized abuse? What would this sound like coming from a weaponized pulpit? One need not wonder too much, as one could merely ask the late televangelist – and CIA asset – Billy Graham, who once proclaimed "You can commit immorality by the way you dress. Yes, we have depraved men, but we also have careless women. That entice men! And wonder why men attack! And assault!" (The New York Times, 1967; quoted in Morris, 2024b; see also Matthew 5:29).¹³

Aside from the obvious implication that much of the theology the world has inherited from previous generations was created, edited, and interpreted by men who were abusive to women and children, the message here is similarly clear: the state/church/abuser is blameless; the dissenter/heretic/victim is the one at fault.

Deny. Attack. Reverse victim and offender – this is the crucial similarity that Bezmenov's handlers recognized as their basis for ideological subversion; and based on what followed, it seems to have worked perfectly.

This leads us to a rather shocking but fairly obvious conclusion: America lost the Cold War without even realizing it. We may have succeeded in defeating communism, but the threat was never merely about an economic system, but rather about the oligarchic authoritarianism and totalitarian terror that accompanied it (see Gilans & Page, 2014). When this is considered, we see that we lost that war the moment we became what we claimed to oppose, in a process that, perhaps unsurprisingly given our nation's checkered past, didn't take long at all according to the historical record (see

Aiello, 2005; Richardson, 2022). Indeed, the Soviet operatives found faith and fellowship with Neo-Confederate “lost-causers” with whom they shared an easily exploitable ideological goal: the reimposition of slavery in the United States and around the world (Morris, 2024a; Geary, Schofield, & Sutton, 2020; Troy, 2024).



Figure 11.5. *They aren't sending their best.*

Left (Crider, 2017): America's toxic history of slavery and exploitation has been itself exploited by both domestic and foreign organized crime syndicates. Fueled by notions of white grievance, this legacy of subjugation has led to violent, even deadly, protests. *Right* (Simmons, 2014): The flag of Novorussiya can be seen. Note the similarities between this flag and the Confederate one on the left. As one senior intelligence official told the author, and which multiple additional sources confirmed, the Russians "took Crimea under a flag they lifted off a shitty bumper sticker on some racist idiot's car." There is also an Israeli connection to this global slavery cartel (Halutz, 2025).

This revelation is more pertinent to our examination than one might initially

suspect. In the end, we find that our apparent confusion about the causes and fundamental nature of modern slavery isn't really due to a complex, multifaceted disagreement between well-meaning parties, but is instead the result of direct, intentional manipulation and misdirection by the most prolific slavers in the modern world: Russia (De Mauro, 2016; Kostin, 2023; Sen, 2022; Waid, 2020; Yeager-Malkin, 2023; Landrin & Ali, 2024). As previously discussed, predators are exceptionally good at finding people's vulnerabilities and exploiting them. Traffickers in particular are masters at social engineering – as are spies, conmen, and saboteurs (see Belton, 2022; Unger, 2021).

The Third Temple: Jerusalem

Once this point is understood, can it really come as a surprise to anyone to learn that Jeffrey Epstein was an Israeli intelligence asset? (Cronin, Howard, & Robertson, 2021; Gertz, 2024; Briquetelet, 2024; Hamilton & Ky, 2019; Groeneveld, 2023; Groeneveld, 2023a; Groeneveld, 2023b; Groeneveld, 2023c; Groeneveld, 2024b; see also Webb, 2022; Webb, 2022a; Thomas & Dillon, 2003; Bates, 2023; Liles, 2022; Peterson & Cook, 2020; Saric, 2023; Appendix 1.) The apple clearly did not fall from the tree: his father-in-law, Robert Maxwell, was considered an Israeli “superspy” who sold American secrets not just to Israel but to the Russians as well (Thomas & Dillon, 2003). Intelligence agencies prefer assets they can control; a well-known predilection toward children certainly provides leverage over such an asset. (Cronin, Howard, & Robertson, 2021; Gertz, 2024). Israel, of course, also plays host to the NSO Group, whose powerful Pegasus spyware serves as the connective tissue among authoritarian regimes and trafficking networks worldwide, from Shin Bet to the International Investment Bank of Moscow to the Sinaloa Cartel to Backpage.com to the Trump Organization to the genocide of indigenous Papuans in Indonesia to the killing fields of Sudan to the very Prince of Darkness and the killers of Jamal Khashoggi (see Grant, 2023; Ahmed & Perlroth, 2017; Shatahmasebi, 2019; ASEAN Regional Coalition to Stop Digital Dictatorship, 2023; Benjakob, 2024; Forbidden Stories, The Guardian (US), & The Washington Post, 2022; Kirchgaessner & Roth, 2023; Rubin, 2022; Srivastava & Wiggins, 2022).¹⁴ The country even sold similar spyware clandestinely (and illegally) to the Junta in Myanmar (see Fig. 11.16; Yaron, 2024; MacLeod, 2023; Raven Mission; TRT World; Bazelon, 2015; Lonsdale; Torres, 2024; Abraham, 2024; Biggar, 2024; The Wire Staff, 2024; Black, Telloğlu, Triantafyllou, & Benjakob, 2022; Baroud, 2019; Altman, 2023; Frankel, 2023; see also Loewenstein, 2024).



Fig. 11.6. (Citizen Lab, 2018) *Pegasus spyware infections, 2016-2018.*

The map displays the results of analysis of Israeli/NSO Pegasus spyware detected in 45 countries from 2016 to 2018. Note that the data was accurate as of 2018; as of this work's publication, the map is 7 years out of date. The data raises the significance of what is often called the "Palestinian Laboratory" and the importance of what occurs in Palestine: weapons and surveillance technology that is first tested on Palestinians in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank is later deployed to suppress minorities across the world (Loewenstein, 2024).

Suddenly it becomes clear that the only reason that Ghislaine Maxwell's trial didn't

get more press because of how catastrophically damaging it would have been for Israel. The genocide of black and brown bodies in faraway places might be all well and good, but open and frank acknowledgement of the sex trafficking of White American children by admitted Mossad operatives would violate a certain IHRA working definition¹⁵. QAnon, it seems, had served its purpose in poisoning the well quite effectively, much like conservative talking points about election fraud (see footnote 47). Once again one finds the nugget of truth hidden within a myth, after ignoring the distractions and misdirection. Russian intelligence agencies compete with Israeli intelligence operations in this matter, sometimes rather comically bickering on shared communications channels over who was where first and had claim over which child.¹⁶ It would be terribly unfortunate if a transcript of that intercepted conversation were to leak – I think that particular discussion took place in the St. Louis area if I recall correctly¹⁷.

Much as with the Mormons whom we later connect to this global black market, it's all about a numbers game and increasing one's relative population in the world, bringing forth again the ugly specter of both cultural genocide and eugenics. These organizations have a lengthy history of exploiting children (especially Indigenous children) in the United States, especially through the “troubled teen” industry that operates “Scared Straight” boot camps, wilderness programs, and other residential schools and programs (cordially and collectively known as “gulag schools” by the children who have survived them) in coordination with the CIA and the Catholic Church – a pattern that will be explored in the next volume.¹⁸

This, in turn, connects back to QAnon through none other than former Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, AKA “Q” (Pangburn, 2017). QAnon, of course, is connected to ISIS through this very same digital general, as is Gamergate – and much, much more.¹⁹ Just wait until you figure out how Harvey Weinstein fits into this same network, or what the whole 23AndMe thing was *really* about, and how it connects to apartheid South Africa's Project Coast (Democracy Now, 2025; Stringwall, 2024b; see van Aken & Hammond, 2003; Wired News Report, 1998; Shelton, et al., 2020; Stewartson, 2024i; Szabó, 2025; USApspending 2025).

These facts are related to a historical agreement strikingly similar to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that was signed in 1962. Known as the Metz Pact, the agreement signed by the Vatican and the Russian Orthodox Church, the Holy See agreed not to condemn Soviet Communism/Marxism in exchange for Russian Orthodox priests serving as observers at the Second Vatican Council. Such an act was not unprecedented for the Vatican, which had made similar agreements through equally clandestine pacts with the Third Reich – as well as with the Soviet Union under Stalin in 1942 under the guidance of Pope Pius XII (Kertzer, 2022; Guimarães). That same year on June 27, Pius XII established the *Istituto per le Opere di Religione* (IOR), more popularly known as the Vatican Bank.

It is important at this point to recall what we have learned about the nature of slavery: human trafficking is, at its core, a financial crime motivated by greed (Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, 2021; see also Brown, 2018; 1 Timothy 6:10; Matthew 21:12-13). With that in mind, a great deal now makes sense. The IOR is notorious for fulfilling a money laundering function in which no one is prosecuted, let alone punished, for their corrupt acts (Nadeau, 2017). Combined with the Vatican's own

secret protocol, revelations of the Church laundering the money of Russian oligarchs comes as no surprise. Pope Francis himself repeatedly extolled the virtues of the Tsarist empire that Vladimir Putin is so obsessed with replicating, going so far as to encourage Ukraine to “find the courage” to wave the white flag in the face of their genocidal oppressors (Chiappa, 2023; Tocci, 2024). Such pontifical declarations serve only to greenlight endless Russian aggression under the pretentious auspices of defending/unifying global Christianity (Tocci, 2024; See also Zarnowski, 2023). As the saying goes, all roads *do* lead to Rome (Roberts & Roussi, 2024; see footnote 23).

This is hardly the end of the horror, for we find that the same violent threat actors responsible for the ongoing sextortion epidemic – a crime which literally drives its young victims to commit suicide – share the same extremist ideology as those who went underground in the aftermath of the Second World War: Nazism. However, this is not ordinary Nazism, but rather Nazism infused with a modern, “new age” esoteric twist to make it more appealing to the masses in such a nefarious way that would make Himmler himself giddy with glee (Berg, 2024; Argentino, G., & Tyler, 2024; Lamoureux, 2024). The intersection between this violent ideology and the populist narratives of QAnon must be carefully studied and are an urgent area prime for additional research (see Evans, 2020; Peters, 2022; Meltzer, 2021). Investigators should also pay attention to the dire implications of this phenomena, especially as it pertains to the recruitment and grooming of children by and into these violent extremist movements in much the same fashion as the Taliban (Zarnowski, 2022; Argentino, G., & Tyler, 2024; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2024; The Fifth Estate, 2024; Craig, 2022; Smith, 2022; Stewartson, 2023c; Stewartson, 2023d; Ewing & Grady, 2006; Knott, 2024; Otto & Winter, 2024; Lewis, 2024). This is also a pertinent time to consider the role of the neo-Nazi founder of the modern Satanic Temple in the subversion of the alternative religion movement (see Dead Domain, 2024 in Appendix 1, Chapter 2 materials).

However, we’re *still* not done with these damning implications. The connection between trafficking and religion explains another case of gaslighting that has become a deeply rooted myth in the American psyche. Considering once again the mechanics of DARVO, what better way is there to cover up ritualized child abuse and pedophilia rings in church communities and leadership circles, and what better way to deflect attention from Christian offenders than by starting a panic about a supposed “fifty to sixty thousand human sacrifices occurring annually in the United States” at the hands of alleged Satanists, despite not a single such case having been proven to occur? (see Luv, 2024; see also Garland, 2024f for insight on the threat to democracy).²⁰⁻²¹

Thus, we find that matters of doctrine and organized crime run together so often that the difference between sacred religious institutions, corporations, transnational crime syndicates, governments, and “terrorist” networks are more a matter of perspective than anything else, precipitating a crisis of legitimacy in which corruption has become the norm. The reader is further encouraged to consider our discussion of Epstein, *kompromat*, and the weaponization of religion in this context, particularly with regard to the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children in Catholic dioceses worldwide (Arnold, 2024; Stringwall, 2024c). Once again, we find that power and control reign supreme in centralized authoritarian systems of belief, providing a narrative and moral justification for human trafficking.²² After all, what are a few exploited children in the greater scheme of fulfilling God’s ultimate plan? The world is very much helped by their

suffering, indeed (see Balakrishna, 2018; footnote 31 in chapter 5).

It is important to note that dogma need not be religious in nature to be problematic. Some of the greatest existential threats facing humanity come not from spirituality but from supposedly “scientific” origins. If some human beings are viewed as expendable in service of some majestic plan that favors another group, inequality becomes not only morally acceptable but morally necessary (see Torres, 2023a; Torres, 2024). Whether it is considered God’s will or merely the natural order of the universe, this makes us see society as necessarily hierarchical, leading ultimately to policies of eugenics. What’s worse is that rulers and societal elites are affected by these same doctrines and dogmas, producing a feedback loop across generations of leaders. They begin to believe their own moral justifications, to the point that they think of themselves as the Archangel Michael himself. Such people are after all subject to the same ego-protection heuristics that we all are.



Link 11.3.

(Price, 2024)

<https://tinyurl.com/cyk9nje3>

Laura Loomer claimed that a black trans doctor would perform an abortion on a white woman on stage at the 2024 Democratic National Convention. Valentina Gomez Noriega added to the stupidity by saying this would be a satanic human sacrifice.

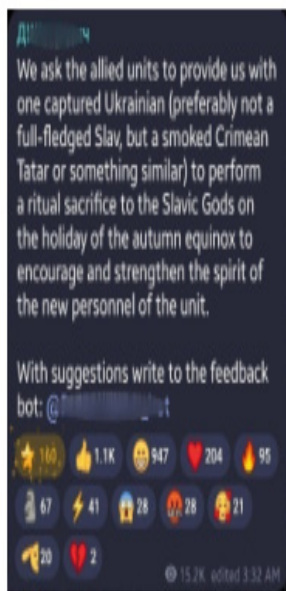


Figure 11.7. *Do you get it yet?*

Left: Racial and gender-based ideological DARVO being deployed on July 29, 2024. Gomez Noriega's connections to slave labor giant Nestle should not be overlooked, nor should her connections to the underworld and intelligence communities (Garland, 2024a; Singh, 2024).

Center: Screenshot taken from a Russian military Telegram channel less than a month later, in August 2024.

Right (Tirawi, 2024): The "most moral army in the world," photo taken in Khan Younis, Gaza, Aug. 2024. The perversion of traditional drag performance illustrates both the eroticization of genocide and the role of gender performance in such acts: namely, the construction of Israeli masculinity through the dehumanization of Palestinian women (Matthews, 2024). Also note what the soldiers did to the doll.

If any question remains as to why we have been spinning in circles for as long as we have been, let me be clear: *we've been duped*. Conned. Hoodwinked. Bamboozled. Hornswoggled. Flimflammed. Cackle-bladdered. Moreover, this has happened not once, but *at least* twice in recent history: first at the hands of the Dulles brothers, and then again at the hands of the KGB.²³ Our most sacred beliefs were twisted and weaponized all to serve the ideological whims of a privileged few – an elite who swore to support and defend us against *all* enemies, both foreign *and* domestic. Somehow, to make matters even worse, we were actively complicit in our own defrauding. We need to face that reality and come to terms with it and all of the implications that follow, especially about what made us so willing to believe in our own superiority in the first place. The solutions to our problems have been staring us in the face all along, but we've been intentionally prevented from seeing them because our minds were, in a literal sense, hacked. However, the jig is now up. Cognitive warfare is the weapon of the few against the many, the weak against the strong; if one does not have the numbers or the strength to win a straight-up fight, then one relies upon the element of deception to assert power and control. But once that deception is exposed, one had better have a very good backup plan to avoid a humiliating defeat.

In all my years in this field, I've not met a trafficker who has such a strategy.

Thus, one is reminded of David Eagleman's advice highlighted in the second chapter: introspection is the most difficult task for a human being to engage in, to the point that it borders on the impossible. Facing reality is not pleasant; in fact, most people are fundamentally incapable of it. It is simply much easier to dwell in delusion than it is to emerge from the darkened cave and face cold, hard facts. The world, after all, is a scary place. It can *kill* you. Indeed, what one assumes to be "fact" can one day turn out to be a carefully orchestrated fiction, as we have just seen. It's quite understandable that human beings make up all sorts of fantasies to convince themselves that they're safe: that if they pray to this God, they'll live a long life; that if they take this medicine or hoard this crystal, they'll be healthy; that if they send their military to invade some random country that sounds threatening or unpronounceable (and honestly, aren't they the same thing?), they themselves won't be invaded or randomly killed in a suicide bombing.

It's terror management theory 101. But face it we must. If we hope to have a brighter future for ourselves and for future generations, then we must confront these illusions head-on for what they are: mere illusions. This, of course, requires asking ourselves some tough questions and being honest with ourselves and our answers. Chief among them is whether these psychosocial structures that we have built to keep us safe – or rather to provide the illusion of safety – are actually keeping us safe? Or are they hindering us and slowly killing us all, the oppressed and oppressor included? Have we built these walls we find around us to keep predators out? Or have we, in fact, locked ourselves in the cage with the proverbial tiger?

If so, how can we do better? And have we, actually, done better before? Has it always been this miserable, as is the common belief, or have we in fact lost something valuable along *homo sapiens'* long journey to the present? Did something go wrong? If so, when and where? Then, if something did go wrong, how did we get stuck in this self-defeating cycle that is recorded history? Did we all collectively fall into this trap at the same time? Or were we led here – either by circumstance, ignorance, malice, or some

combination of these? Much more importantly, where are we going? Is this the path that we really, fundamentally want to take for ourselves and our children?

These are unpleasant questions to ask, and they generate so much cognitive dissonance in us that we simply prefer not to ask them at all. Yet, this is precisely why we must ask them, for we now find ourselves at a crossroad for having refused to ask them before. We are running out of space to live in a closed system with diminishing resources. This problem is exacerbated by the looming climate crisis, an atrocity that is not entirely by accident, but also by design (Speth, 2021; Cohn, 2024). At merely 2.7 °C of warming, two billion people will be exposed to extreme heat, with 99.73% of the exposure occurring in the global south, turning much of the southern hemisphere into a sacrifice zone. At 3.0 °C of warming, approximately 50% of the world's population, or some 4 billion people, are expected to die by 2050 (Trust, et al., 2025; p.32). It's important to note that the 2.7-3.0 °C of warming may itself be a vast underestimate (Pearce & Parncutt, 2023; Lenton, et al. 2023; Sherwood, Bony, & Dufresne, 2014; Goodkind, 2024; Wikowski, et al., 2024; Riggs, 2024 and Riggs, 2024a.)

Greenhouse gas emissions, 2023

Greenhouse gas emissions¹ include carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide from all sources, including land use change. They are measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents² over a 100-year timescale.

The World
Edits

Climate Vulnerability

0.2 0.65

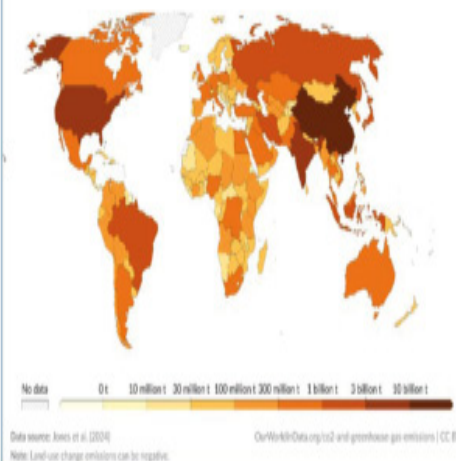


Figure 11.8. *The grand plan: Mass genocide through climate change.*

The map on the left shows countries with the most emissions responsible for climate change (Ritchie, et al., 2024). The map on the right shows the countries most impacted by climate change (ND-GAIN, 2025). Suddenly, everything we've discussed makes a lot more sense, from the eugenics, the great race for the arctic among superpowers, Musk's obsession with annexing Canada and Greenland to create the North American "Technate", the machinations of the petro-mafia, Putin's deportation of enslaved Ukrainians to build Siberian "population centers," and the psychological priming for genocide that is QAnon. It's *lebensraum*. For what it's worth, you were warned that the truth behind disclosure is really dark – it's not like the CIA has UFO/UAP thought influencers on an email chain to keep you distracted from what the Agency has really been up to (Maniak-Of-Copy, 2025; Johnson, 2025; Bledsoe, 2022). ET isn't threatening us; instead, in true DARVO and horror movie fashion, the call is coming from inside the house. To this end, the intrepid researcher would be wise to examine the eugenics-driven, new age ideology that has been slow-dripped into humanity's collective consciousness beginning with "encounters" with so-called "Nordic" or "Aryan" aliens, explaining how interest in UAP phenomena has recently merged with QAnon beliefs (Evans, 2022a). Also note the overlap between Christian extremist and new age "Starseed" discussion of "spiritual warfare" (Devega, 2025; Whysosirius5, 2025). That certainly makes you wonder what the "Legacy" program really is, doesn't it? *Whose* legacy are they referring to, I wonder? Lue-cy, you have a lot of explaining to do (Dziak, 2025).

In economics, this is known as development; in biology, this is termed cancer. A

solution is in all of our collective interests, because right now the only thing we've really mastered is shooting ourselves in the foot. Somehow, we have to break the cycle and stop the never-ending feedback loops. This is perhaps the ultimate takeaway that our examination offers: "living space" is dwindling rapidly – as evidenced by widespread ethnic cleansing in Ukraine and Palestine, followed by Russian and Israeli settlers moving into the now-empty homes – while slavery serves an effective means to eugenicist ends (Stringwall, 2024n; Polianska, 2024; Robinson, Rivault, & Robinson, 2023; Beketova, 2023; Hogarth, 2022; see also Gruner, 2008; Unknown, 2007; Wollheim Memorial; Stringwall, 2024n).

Further infuse these eugenicist notions of building a better *Übermensch* with "culture war" narratives and the religious conviction that *Gott mit uns*, and one has the recipe for nothing short of holy war (see Fig. 10.7; Link 10.3; Zarnowski, 2023; Sweet & Toth, 2023; Stringwall, 2023; Stringwall, 2024; Stringwall, 2024a; Olmert, 2024; Lord, 2024; Stewartson, 2023; Stewartson, 2023a; MF, 2022; Ahmed, 2022; Haque, 1999; Carroll, 2018; Chowdhury, 2021; Bullet, 1993; Bazian, 2018; Hadar, 1992; Hadar, 1993; Grant, 2023; McPhee, 2023; Fitzgerald, 2023; Becker & Scheck, 2023; Layne, 2017; Pleshakov, 2000; Unknown, 1994; Justice for All; Harris, 2020; Çaksu, ۲۰۲۰; Murphy, ۲۰۱۳; Dhume, ۲۰۲۰; Roy, ۲۰۲۰; Whydyou saydat, ۲۰۲۰). Suddenly, it becomes critically important to recognize that most Zionists are not Jewish, but Christian, and these Christian Zionists seek the return of the Jews to the holy land merely to ensure that they are subsequently eradicated in the Apocalypse. Zionism, after all, was the original Christian "solution" to the "Jewish problem" (see Bicheno, 1807; UK Parliament, 1939; Cowen, 2002; Alam, 2009a; Donald, 2021; Green, 2005).²⁴ I think we all remember how that turned out the last time. Can we really be surprised that it resulted in the very same horrors in Palestine?²⁵ (See Fig. 11.9.)

With this reality in mind, the actions of the so-called "Collins Elite" neatly align with many of the atrocities described in the last few chapters and into the present. It is the opinion of the author that the involvement of this group in the events of the past 25 years should be thoroughly investigated (as should those of the administration that brought this merry band of ideologist nitwits into the fold), and charges brought as merited. Multiple catastrophic wars and genocides were allowed – nigh, outright *enabled* – all because this small group of fundamentalist Christians high in the ranks of the United States government projected their religious beliefs onto (and I cannot stress enough that I am *not* joking here) notions of little green men from outer space (Redfern, 2013, pp. 191-225; see also Footnote 17 in Chapter 9).²⁶

This nightmarishly catastrophic debacle is worth further study as to how biases, cognitive dissonance, cultural narratives, and persecution complexes can shape the interpretation of otherwise unrelated phenomena up to the point of staging, and live-action role-playing (LARPing), the literal apocalypse as described in the Book of Revelations across the entire globe (see Redfern, 2013).

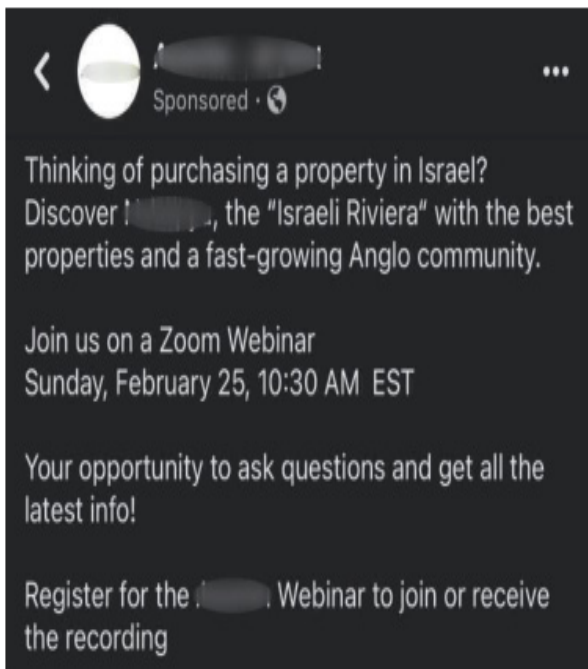


Figure 11.9. (Zarnowski, 2024) *Lebensraum*, as captured on February 19, 2024.

A “fast-growing Anglo community.” See Goldfield, 2024; see also Mațoi. The genocide in Gaza was carefully orchestrated through a blend of policy, organized crime/intelligence backchannels, and merely waiting for the inevitable to occur. Hamas served effectively as controlled opposition for Israel, facilitating the annexation of both Gaza and the West Bank while also triggering the desired confrontation with Iran (Maddox, 2015; Booty, 2024; Office of the Spokesperson, 2024; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2024; Cohen, Lillis, Bertrand, & Herb, 2023; Agencies, 2023; Tlozek, Halpern, & Horn, 2024; TOI Staff, 2024; Harnisch, 2009; AP News Wire, 2022; Ahren, 2020; Surkes, 2017; Kahana, 2020; Gorodetsky, 2016; Bergman, 2016; Cook, 2023; Sweet & Toth, 2023; Halabi, 2024; Petersburg, 2024; The Moscow Times, 2024; Ofir, 2023a; Grossman, 2023; Rose, 2008; Cook, 2012; Kahana, 2023; Cohen, 2023; Cohen, 2024; Bergman & Goldman, 2023; Piette, 2023; Ofir, 2017; Ofir, 2023; Lis, 2023; Stewartson, 2023b; Stringwall, 2023; Stringwall, 2024; Stringwall, 2024a; Stewartson, 2023; Schneider, 2023; Mazzetti & Bergman, 2023; Becker & Scheck, 2023; Hass, 2024; Reiff, 2023; Smotrich, 2018; Pelli, 2023; Brown, 2024; Barghouti, 2023; Michaelson, Borger, & Sinnmaz, 2023; Allon, 2024; Anonymous, 2023; Kubovich, 2024; Glazer, 2024; News Desk, 2023; MEMO, 2023; Michaeli & Scharf, 2024; Sfard, 2024; Zhang, 2024a; Hecht, 2024; see also Durand, 2022; Eymond-Laritz; Redbird & Homaniuk, 2023; Short, 2022; Benn, 2024). Before one condemns a conspiracy theory as “antisemitic,” one must always make sure that one is not, in fact, dealing with a clandestine Shin Bet operation (source redacted).

This, quite ironically, correlates with UAP witness testimonies.²⁷ Indeed, the influence of this small but privileged group can be detected in the weaponization and DARVO inversion of the factually non-existent “Project Blue Beam” myth and “drone” hysteria that drew the attention of the public and popular media in late 2024 (Redfern, 2013 pp. 215-218; see Troy, 2024b for a reasonable analysis of how this phenomenon was misused to incite mass panic and distract from actual events of import during this period; see also Ryan, 2024 in the context of Redfern, 2013 pp. 215-218, and know that the science to remotely and artificially induce this separate, specific phenomenon mentioned in Ryan, 2024 is also well established and in line with the agenda of the Collins Elite; Meda, 2019; Jeeves & Brown, 2009; pp. 95-96).

This manufactured hysteria continued to play out into 2025 following the dual New Year’s Day attacks in New Orleans and Las Vegas. A manifesto allegedly from the Las Vegas bomber was “leaked” via *the Shawn Ryan Show*²⁸, claiming that the aforementioned drones were using advanced “anti-gravitic (sic)” technology only available to the United States and China and demanding that the United States government give a “history of this” technology (Ryan, 2025; see also Webb, 2025a). In UAP parlance, the memo, ostensibly from the now-deceased soldier and terrorist, was calling for “disclosure.”²⁹

There are several things to note about how this unfolded. First is that the pivot to claims of demonic and/or extraterrestrial influences was first predicted in November of 2024 by American intelligence assets, predating both the “drone” phenomena and the bombings (Troy, 2024b). Second is that the manifesto was quickly disputed due to numerous digital forensics issues that revealed the author of the statement was actually not the deceased Green Beret (Tardio, 2025; Tardio, 2025a; Tardio, 2025b; McBeth, 2025; Green Beret Nap Time, 2025; Green Beret Nap Time, 2025a). Additionally, those who worked to correct the misinformation in the manifesto quickly found their loved ones suffering from symptoms remarkably consistent with those of Havana Syndrome (Tardio, 2025). It is worth noting (for reasons that will become apparent) that one possible motivation for this continued narrative in the form of a hastily constructed manifesto was that it was quickly discovered that the attacks bore not the fingerprints of the Islamic State as initially reported, but rather those of Mossad. (See Appendix 1 materials for this chapter to better understand the Mossad playbook, which has remained remarkably unchanged over the years, and which continues to regard Jewish life as expendable. The same pattern carries over to the larger Gladio network that Mossad was absorbed into.)

One final but vital connection that was hastily glossed over by a complicit media was the fact that both terrorists had been stationed at Fort Liberty, formerly known as Fort Bragg, home to the United States Army’s Psychological Operations Command (and which was also home to a certain, aforementioned former lieutenant general; John, 2025; Kovaleski & Haaf, 2025; see also McMahan, 2025) .³⁰ In a twist that in absolutely no way foreshadows where this discussion is headed as we conclude this volume, Ft. Liberty hosts an unusual plethora of child sex abuse cases where the perpetrators are soldiers (Harp, 2025).

Future weaponization of UAP events and narratives as a natural extension of the QAnon psychological operation will only further the weaponization of religion to justify additional militarization, control, and atrocities (Guest, 2022; Rektagonality, 2025;



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

1951

MEMORANDUM TO: Director, Psychological Strategy Board

SUBJECT: Flying Saucers

1. I am today transmitting to the National Security Council a proposal (TAB A) in which it is concluded that the problems connected with unidentified flying objects appear to have implications for psychological warfare as well as for intelligence and operations.

2. The background for this view is presented in some detail in TAB B.

3. I suggest that we discuss at an early board meeting the possible offensive or defensive utilization of these phenomena for psychological warfare purposes.

Walter B. Smith

Director

Enclosure

Fig. 11.10 (Zarnowski, 2025) *Spinning the Saucers*. The Collins Elite's own DARVO inversion of UAP seems to have continued unabated (Guest, 2022; Smith, n.d.; Coldeve99, 2025; esosecretgnosis, 2025). The author obviously cannot speak to the motives or actions of alleged extraterrestrial beings; however, the author is certainly more than familiar with various intelligence agencies and their "fingerprints," and strongly recommends dusting the handle of the most recent additions to the narrative warfare gun for familiar prints. For the record, I really didn't want to tread this path; my hand was forced – I am what you made me, after all. The lesson one should take from this matter and that the Agency decided to spin a narrative around, assuming there is anything to it at all, is that certain phenomena really do not like to be weaponized – hence past injuries. These injuries serve as both a warning as to the dangers of potential misuse as well as a built-in safeguard against misusing them too much. While we can certainly monetize phenomena to improve our lives, we can't, and shouldn't, weaponize it. I suspect this was a lot of peoples' mistakes in previous years – it was certainly Snowden's and Buterin's mistake, at least (see Edwards, 2025; Riard & Naumenko, 2021; Fig. 11.14, Bolton, 2025). Forgive yet another Star Wars reference, Dr. Pasulka, but one should think along the lines of "dark side" corruption versus "light side" healing to understand how this works. The key is informed consent and, for lack of a better term, non-weaponization – with such agreements in place, the downloads can continue without risk of harm. Referring back to the Collins Elite and the narratives presented by certain, government-approved UAP "whistleblowers," their interests seem to neatly align with that of tech oligarch Peter Thiel (Troy, 2025; Bocley, 2025; Rektagonality, 2025). Peter Thiel, of course, is strongly connected to the Catholic cult Opus Dei, as well as to the CIA. There is one single cardinal rule in the Agency, and that is to never, ever mess with the Vatican. As was the case with Besmenov, we are all being played.

Such narratives are already being seeded by intelligence operatives on a massive scale.³¹ (See Shawn Ryan Show, 2023 for the implications for the facilitation of human trafficking. It's something along the lines of "it's not us, it's the aliens!", "If we don't give them what they want, yada yada"; Baniyas, 2019; Carter, 2025; phr99, 2025.) As we have seen, politics is all about power and control – not good governance, and certainly not the well-being of the governed. "Aliens," much like "demons," make a convenient excuse for covering up very human atrocities, and the lengths human beings will go to just to excuse their own depravities and crimes is exhausting (Hurley, 2021).³²

It is important to understand that there is nothing divine, supernatural, extraterrestrial, or metaphysical about this plan. It is a work of man and man alone, designed by clever spies and monsters to deceive people into believing it to be the work of God, for *Gott mit uns*. As we've seen throughout this chapter, literally anything – be it pedophilia, slavery, or outright genocide – can be justified if one feels they have been chosen by God. This is nothing more than the latest iteration of an ancient holy war between cults to determine which mafia will control the world. After all, there are two main mafias in our modern world: one that operates out of the Kremlin, and one that captured the state of Israel a quarter century ago that goes by the name of "Likud."^{33, 34}

It is far past time for a *tertia optio*.

The Stunning Implications of Narrative Warfare and the World's Oldest Holy War

It is important now to discuss the concept of **narrative warfare**. As we have seen,

Understanding the narrative around human trafficking is key to understanding what we are doing right and what we are doing wrong in combating slavery. Narrative also plays a large role in our daily lives, not to mention in the guiding of entire civilizations. Naturally, someone would weaponize it along the way.

Whereas information warfare can be thought as a war over facts, or what is or is not factual, narrative warfare takes this a step further. Narrative warfare accepts that facts are facts. There are no alternative facts. Narrative warfare is about influence: what do the facts *mean*. It is about *interpreting* the facts into the narrative that suits the purpose of the one telling the story (Maan, 2018). Writing for *Real Clear Defense*, the preeminent scholar of narrative warfare, Dr. Ajit Maan, writes,

“This form of warfare is all about influence. But this is not information warfare; this is warfare over the *meaning* of the information. Information consists of facts—raw data. Narratives do not tell the facts. Narratives tell the meaning of the facts. This is narrative warfare, and our adversaries are beating our brawn with their brains. That is why the Islamic State is able to draw recruits from around the world to travel to conflict zones to fight, and that is how they can encourage homegrown terrorists to take lethal action without *physical* coercion.”³⁵ (Author’s emphasis added.)

The connection to the psychological realm, coercion, and human trafficking is clear. Dr. Maan continues, “Weaponized narratives on social media are the extremist recruiter’s favorite tool. To stem the rise of extremism, eliminating extremists themselves is a temporary fix. The comprehensive long-term fix is to render extremist narratives obsolete.”

There is a connection between extremist narratives and the ones traffickers rely upon, as can be seen in extremist and terrorist networks. However, I would suggest our focus should be upon narratives that are not necessarily extremist but that fuel the issue of slavery, intentionally or not. These trafficking narratives serve only to enslave the mind, keeping us in a perpetual feedback cycle where we cannot escape the python-like stranglehold of the world serpent that envelopes us.

As we have seen throughout this volume and much to Dr. Maan’s point about the elimination of extremists, arresting individual traffickers only does so much; we must ultimately address the underlying ideology and narratives that traffickers use to seize power and control over their victims. Perhaps this is ultimately why we are seeing no progress in our struggle: we are stuck in a rut, limited by an archaic paradigm while our foes have progressed past us. Sometimes, as narrative warfare tells us, facts are facts. But *interpretation* is another matter. Once one understands this, one sees that the American legal system is entirely centered on a war of narratives meeting in a courtroom, with the truth mattering little. With a compelling narrative by their side, the guilty can convince their fellow citizens to let them get away with literal murder. And as we have seen, if one can control the narrative, one can control an entire war, be it literal or all in the mind.

The previous section of this chapter raises additional questions regarding narratives and their connections to organized crime and human trafficking rings. The author is certainly not doubting the existence or legitimacy of God, Jesus, Muhammad (PBUH), or any other prophet or holy person as much as he is begging the reader to consider this

one simple question: given what we have seen as to these supposedly holy institutions' guilt in the most heinous crimes, just how sure are you that the scriptures and practices you have memorized since you were a child weren't modified by these criminal enterprises – a letter here, a word there, an accidental mistranslation here (and accidents do happen – man is fallible even if God is not), an *interpretation* there – to further their mafia-like enterprises? As we have seen throughout this book, the truth of a matter is rarely as presented.

After all, child sexual abuse was condemned as a sin punishable by instantaneous death up until 1946, a mere four years after restoring the money-changing tables in the Temple to their upright position (with some help from the fascist powers of that day), when that interpretation from the pages of Leviticus suddenly vanished overnight and was replaced by that which induced a sheer moral panic (Kane, 2011; Hershey, 2019). Of course, that doesn't even touch upon what scholars tell us is described in Numbers 5:11-31. With that in mind, how sure can anyone be that what we now refer to as "the divine word" is *the* original word and not a "sanitized" version that has over centuries merely been "approved" for the otherwise unenlightened laymen by their betters – for slave bibles were a real thing in the colonization of the New World (Lumpkin, 2019)³⁶. After all, if someone is willing to rape a child, is it that great a stretch to imagine that they would twist the words of God to suit themselves and defend their actions?

Of course not! We see this literally all the time!

Thus, one doesn't so much need to have faith in God to believe that these powerful elite didn't manipulate scriptures to their ends inasmuch as faith in what we demonstrably know to be the hearts of corrupt men - rapists, pedophiles, traffickers, and more often than not, outright murderers and genocidaires. One must remember that it was the Romans, not the Jews the Romans later scapegoated, who murdered Jesus Christ after he chased them out of the Holy for setting up a Roman bank in His father's temple, only to centuries later attempt to reclaim his brave and increasingly popular move as their own by selectively editing his doctrine at Nicea and then presenting this new, carefully selected worldview as, "hey, this is what the man you worshipped believed – and remember, we're absolutely on his side and are the good guys in all of this."

If that is not the very definition of a state-sponsored psychological operation based in the mechanics of DARVO, then I don't know what is. And don't get me started on the whole melanin reduction surgery that Jesus underwent.

Can we really be surprised that the same institution that was founded in such a deceptive and power-consolidating method is rife with trafficking and child sex abuse, moving predators around from place to place in some diabolical chess game to ensure they are never held accountable? *These* are the questions we should be asking, not whether the young person playing soccer was assigned the socially acceptable yet completely arbitrary categorization at birth - for the latter issue is a mere distraction from the former. It's sort of like complaining about sign language interpreters being present at press conferences about raging wildfires while people are losing their lives in said wildfires, all while being part of the movement and the reason that there are so many wildfires. I'm sure such a complainant wouldn't also have been making nonsense claims about Haitian migrants eating people's pets while simultaneously providing cover for a genocide (Garcia, 2025; Wolf, 2025; Synolakis & Karagiannis, 2024; see also Footnote 47). There certainly seems to be a distinct pattern arising, that's for sure.

Come to think of it, isn't this interpretation of scripture in and of itself a form of narrative warfare? Isn't this a form of narrative warfare by the powerful few against the impotent many to consolidate their grip on the societies that place their trust in them, just as traffickers trick their victims into trusting them?

In this same manner, and perhaps much more to the point under consideration, isn't the author himself engaging in an act of narrative warfare in the last few paragraphs, perhaps³⁷ in an attempt to showcase just how widespread the tactic is and how susceptible audiences are to falling prey to such forms of aggression without even being conscious of being attacked until the deception is exposed - and perhaps not even then? In the end, I suspect that more than a few readers will agree with my *interpretation* of events, despite my honesty about what has transpired over the last page or so. Others will feel so morally aggrieved to spend hours crafting eloquent responses to the author's example, despite him, once again, being fully transparent about what has transpired. Hence the power of influence and cognitive warfare.

This form of warfare, of course, plays into the aforementioned plan originally set in motion by the Bush administration and which has been continued by every administration since to carve up the Middle East and topple the Iranian regime (Stringwall, 2025). This is, in turn, part of the Vatican's millennia-old crusade/holy war against Islam, a continuation of the clash of civilizations that dates back to *at least* Thermopylae. To this point is the fact that many Roman influences, traditions, and rituals can even be found in Islam. (See Looking Glass Forum entries in Appendix 1, Podcast materials for this chapter, while noting that, for the record, the author does not condone the tone of the resources listed or the labeling of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a "false" prophet as done in the provided material; however, the overall material provided gives important context to the larger global situation. The etymology of the word "Baphomet" is particularly interesting when considered in this context.)

Unfortunately, it seems that the idea of Rome in its imperial glory never really went away but merely shifted its capitol after calling the area inside the Beltway home for a number of centuries (Al Jazeera English, 2025). The same is true of its destructive idolatry (Burns, 2021). People, particularly men, are still obsessed with the glory of the Roman Empire which ended over 1500 years ago, while others are obsessed with reestablishing their ancestral homelands that existed before this dreadful idea rose to power in Italy and the surrounding area to the exclusion of everyone else already living in those areas for the past 2000 years (Wong, 2023; Cole, 2023).

This is, in a word, stupid. Much like the discourse to be found in anti-trafficking circles, we continue to rehash old grievances and disputes. It's no surprise that we're going nowhere fast – in the year 2025, we're still having the same conversations that were had in 500 B.C., if not earlier. We must remember that Rome fell for a good reason, just as ancient Persia did, and a significant part of that reason was the empire's rampant corruption, unending wars, and reliance on practices of enslavement and trafficking. It's far past time to retire the onagers and dismantle the ballistae – we simply don't need to be doing this anymore.

The Modern World: On Cults and "Cult Warfare"

Compounding this is the fact that the Russian genocide in Ukraine has exposed a deepening rift among the U.S. military, the U.S. intelligence community, and the Five

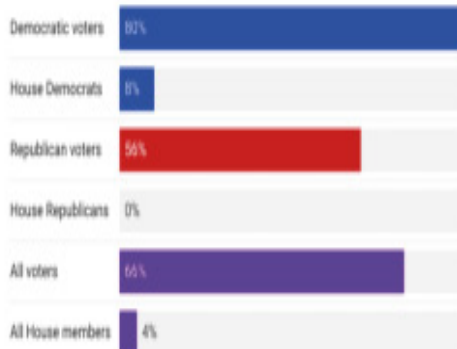
Eyes alliance. This growing distrust traces back to the right-wing shift within Five Eyes in the 1980s, driven by the Star Wars program aimed at countering the Soviet Union. During this period, religious indoctrination gained ground in the U.S., aligning with an Israeli-centric intelligence network that communicates through a hybrid religious language known as “Hasbara.” In the United States, this movement was closely tied to grassroots Christian fundamentalism, with strong connections to Zionism, which eventually morphed into “Digital Zionism,” a crypto-centric ideology now embedded within the Five Eyes infrastructure. This shift also deepened divisions within the Jewish community, creating tensions between figures like George Soros, the Eurasia Group, and Bain Capital. Rather than an abrupt coup, this transformation reflects a 30-year rise in nationalism, fueled by capitalist exploitation of religious indoctrination within military structures.

These Five Eyes programs intersected with Israeli intelligence through remnants of MK-ULTRA, a mass mind control project. Ideological indoctrination took root in groups like Calvary Chapel, led by Mike McIntosh, whose doctrine resonated with right-wing leaders like Netanyahu under biblical justifications. These groups mixed prophecy with political foresight, weaving deniable chains of events—such as trips to Kurdistan and the Holy Land—that foreshadowed major events like 9/11. Ideological hubs, such as those in Northern Indianapolis, became breeding grounds for this warfare, linking ideology to crypto laundering, where Ethereum³⁸ transactions are seen as miraculous acts, fueling ideological purity among believers. These Ethereum “laundries” are often intertwined with Russian oil money, funneled through entities like DST Global, whose investments in Flexport have enabled price manipulation. This laundering process connects intelligence-harvesting with ideology, blending metadata collected from Huawei switches to sign Ethereum blockchains, using stolen conversations from platforms such as Telegram and embedding them into smart contracts. These contracts are cut into Russian and Iranian oil and intelligence-trafficked back via Azerbaijani mixers in the business community of the Trump tower under the watch of the Oracle corporation’s Israeli intelligence unit. These units are extremely closely tied to the use and execution of Havana Syndrome attacks inside the United States, a point that I’ll expand upon shortly.³⁹

The core issue in the United States, however, is not rooted in ideology but in its absence—unchecked capitalism is the real problem. It would be far preferable to fill this ideological void with a vibrant, secular democracy that celebrates wisdom, knowledge, and cultural heritage without needing a messianic leader. This would dismantle the imperial hierarchies embedded in global right-wing ideologies, which are exploited by the wealthy to create “mind slaves” and sustain a corrupt balance of power between society and organized crime.

Most voters want a ceasefire, but hardly anyone in Congress supports one

% in favor of a ceasefire in Gaza



Data: H.Res.786, Data for Progress 20 Oct 2023 poll. More: stephenserier.substack.com

Figure 11.11. (Semler, 2023) *Creating an excess of supply in real time, as of October 20, 2023.* Ultimately, human trafficking is perhaps best understood, at the big-picture level, as a form of *organized* transnational crime (Shelley, 2007; see Fig. 11.16). Indeed, over 1.9 million refugees, most of them women and children, would certainly be a ready supply of cheap, exploitable labor (Conkling, 2024; Ahmed & Michaelson, 2024; Mohammed, 2024; Shamir, 2023). Those who monitor the slave trade need to prepare to see Gazans trafficked *en masse* across the world, but particularly in countries “sympathetic” to the Palestinian cause that take in lots of refugees for “humanitarian” purposes – just as Ukrainian women were trafficked across Western Europe following February 2022 (Piper, 2024; Halabi, 2024; Petersburg, 2024; The Moscow Times, 2024; Lis, 2023; Ofir, 2023; Tirari, 2023; The Liveblog, 2023; DeBatto, 2023; Business Ukraine Magazine, 2023; Shepel, 2023; see also Marsden, 2024). See also Reuters, 2023; Abramson, 2018; Abramson, 2019; Abramson, 2020; Kendzior, 2021; Kendzior, 2023; West, 2016; Jamal & Robbins, 2023; Samuels & Tibon, 2023; Mafarjeh, 2023. The reader should also reference popular support for Hamas in Gaza both immediately before and after such major Israeli military offensives such as *Protective Edge* to get a proper understanding of this dynamic. The implications for the global organ trade are also significant but must be carefully evaluated to avoid the spread of baseless blood libel – while also noting that if something actually factually and historically happened, it isn’t libel to say so (Weiss, 2014; Weiss, 2015; Black, 2009; Lundin, 2012; Kallepalli, 2023; Griffin & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Scheper-Hughes, 2008; Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 2023).

In recent years, tensions within this system have spilled over into the public domain,


leading to a chain reaction with disastrous effect. This was triggered by the fact that Oracle Israel's operations for the better part of a decade, perhaps unintentionally, irradiated a large portion of the United States with microwave radiation (see Morrison, 2016; again, as elsewhere noted, the dates are important for the intrepid researcher).⁴⁰ While the microwave radiation from these operations might seem to be at safe levels, there is a cumulative effect. Such low-level exposure would be difficult to detect, and while it would not produce burns or other effects associated with high levels (and far from the exaggerated claims of causing cancer and rendering men sterile), this low-level exposure – especially over a lengthy period of time – could have deleterious effects on one's immune system and ability to fight infection. Even common colds, flu viruses, and respiratory infections that would normally result in a few sniffles would take on new, lethal ramifications as the body fought harder with weaker defenses against the infections (Rubick & Brown, 2021; Simkó & Mattsson, 2019; Szmigielski, 2013; Johansson, 2009; Yakymenko, et al., 2016; El-Gohary, & Said, 2017).

Of course once this was discovered, the problem wasn't corrected. In a world where the balancing factor is literally *organized crime*, it never would be. Instead, the worst impulses of humanity once again took over: the effect was weaponized. In coordination with Russian operatives from GRU unit 29155 (and in exchange for the laundering of FSB kompromat through Israeli Shin Bet over the Ethereum blockchain), Israel Oracle's operations directly targeted CIA officers with directed energy weapons to amplify the unpredictable effects and nature of the double-tap strike of COVID-19 and radiation, in a phenomenon that came to become known as "Havana Syndrome" (Dobrokhoto, Grozev, & Weiss, 2024; Morrison, 2016). It is difficult for even the best medical professionals to differentiate between biological and radiological attacks, especially when the two are combined, as the symptoms are very similar, (Iglesias, 2024). The specific biological mechanism involved is important for the replication of coronaviruses in particular (Ponnusamy, et al. 2008). However, it is important to note that microwave weapons are certainly detectable when they are activated, if one just so happens to have the right equipment. With these facts in hand, it is remarkable to note that Havana, Cuba of all places was considered far more suited to adopt advanced telecommunication technologies before even many major metropolitan cities in the United States (Press, 2019). The reader should specifically note the correlation between the timing of onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and DOD funding (not NIH funding), even before there was a pandemic in February 2020, indicating that the DOD knew precisely where the problem originated (a pandemic was declared in March 2020; USAspending, 2025).

There is a great irony in this tale of how Oracle Israel's systems were turned against American CIA officers: Oracle itself was originally a CIA project (Novak, 2014). It is the author's opinion that there is a lesson in this story that will be completely lost upon those who most desperately need to learn it. One might be surprised to learn that there is often a scarcity of intelligence within intelligence agencies.

Given these stark revelations, a question raised in the last chapter becomes all the more pertinent: what atrocities are we being groomed to commit?⁴¹ (See Malik, 2024; Matthew, 2024.) More importantly, how can we break the cycle of trauma and keep from repeating the mistakes that perpetuate it? We have found that one does not need such contraptions as voice-to-skull technology and mind-altering substances to induce ordinary people to levels of sheer animalistic depravity (Winter, Antonshchuk, Smith, &

Radnofsky, 2024; Harrell, 2024; Dodgson, 2023; Doyle, 2024). Such methods are simply too expensive to replicate at the population level, assuming one could first solve the problem of distribution. Practicality requires a simpler approach, with the processes of moral disengagement and moral justification serving as effective and surreptitious entry points to the human mind. Just as important is how trauma, in comparison to LSD, is *much* more effective in breaking people down and making people dependent on and obedient to authority (Fett, 2023; Mitchell). The same phenomena are found in cults, high-intensity religious settings,⁴² domestic violence situations, and the perpetrator/victim dynamics of modern slavery. The thing about cults, of course, is that a person rarely realizes they are in one until long after they leave.⁴³

 **Link 11.4.** (Refaat in Gaza, 2023) <https://tinyurl.com/yf27a9wu>

Referring to Link 10.3, this link (login possibly required) provides a particularly vile example of how tribalization leads to dehumanization and killing, Refaat Alareer was a Palestinian professor and writer who chronicled the experiences of Gazans. Among the "X" exchanges that can be viewed here is one between Alareer and journalist Bari Weiss that began when Weiss reposted an unsupported claim about an Israeli baby having been baked to death in an oven by Hamas terrorists. Alareer mocked the conspiracy theory, which led to a flurry of depraved, vitriolic threats against Alareer and his family by Weiss's followers. Alareer and at least six members of his family were killed only weeks later in an Israeli airstrike one day after he received a threatening call from the Israeli military. (Aziza, 2024; See also Palestine Chronicle Staff, 2023 and, especially, Silverstein, 2023).

It is critical to note the threats of sexual violence and especially the QAnon-inspired accusation of pedophilia present in these posts. At the time of this writing, there remains no evidence whatsoever that an Israeli child was burned in an oven by Hamas (Sudilovsky, 2023). However, in the ultimate perfection of DARVO, a Palestinian child was in fact burned to death in an oven by Zionist forces in the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre (Fernando, 2023; see also Beeley, 2024; Fatima, 2024).

The crisis of imagination that we examined in the last chapter as it pertained to psychological constructs is a key issue that must be addressed in remedying these antiquated notions in an effort to ultimately free ourselves from this self-destructive cycle. Those supporting Ukraine in her struggle against the genocidal invasion by Russia at the hands of Vladimir Putin often found themselves dumbstruck at the lack of military support offered to the country by her allies, or the limitations placed upon the weapons that were provided. It turns out that this was not done out of malice, nor out of a genuine lack of support, but due to a simple lack of imagination. World leaders, it turns out, simply could not envision how to make their collective economies work without the dynamics of a forever war driving them. An endless supply of 155mm artillery shells being produced over a period of years would never win the war against the Russian horde. As Ukrainians repeatedly tried to explain, that approach only cost more Ukrainian lives as the war dragged on. A squadron or two of A-10 Warthogs could have immediately obliterated the Russian frontlines; but such a resounding victory didn't really serve the economic status quo, and thus, it wasn't even considered a possibility for the leaders sitting at the table discussing how to end the war.

That possibility didn't even cross their minds. Much like the child born as intersex or transgender to adults who can only see gender along a strict binary, *it didn't make sense*

to them. And so they dismissed the concept due to what can only be described as a complete lack of creativity – the inability to imagine a different, and *better*, world. It wasn't until someone (to whom I am eternally grateful) suggested that sending *real* weapons, such as Tomahawk cruise missiles or their equivalent, could end the war and restore peace that the possibility was even considered. This tragic but all too real example reveals that the absolute worst trends in world history are little more than idiot plots planted by God to drive the story forward. We find the unabashed stupidity of evil revealed once more.

🔗 **Link 11.5.** (Azman, 2024) <https://tinyurl.com/5eh6e2w7>

“*We’re very lucky they’re so effing stupid.*” Here, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Michael Flynn is handing Chief Rabbi Moshe Azman of Ukraine a copy of the same book that is referenced in Link 10.3. The very day after this meeting, on December 20, 2024, Russia struck St. Michael’s Monastery in Kyiv along with a number of embassies, including those of NATO member states. (The reader is wise to consider the religious symbology present among the targets struck.) What was significant about these strikes is that they were coordinated and directed via Israel’s Lavender AI system, which first became publicly known due to its use in the Gaza genocide the year before (see Abraham, 2024; Biggar, 2024). In attempting to establish a communications line to directly alert the Ukrainian SBU/DIU to this reality, the author was rebuked, being told to “follow his chain of command.” When he responded that his chain of command was compromised and that no one in the United States wanted to deal with the issue since it incriminated Israel, he was again told “to follow his chain of command.” Once again, a mere lack of imagination nearly led to the loss of tens of thousands of innocent Ukrainian lives. Fortunately, the issue quickly resolved itself as the two goobers pictured here were found smiling for the cameras all over social media. The author might have additionally circumvented his chain of command – his memory of the time is fuzzy at best.

It may help some to think of such situations, including ours, as bureaucracies: we’ve simply lost sight of what it is we’re supposed to be doing, often through the best of intentions. Someone identifies a problem, a well-placed saboteur suggests that a committee be formed to endlessly study the problem, and the issue metastasizes. But instead of talking about functions of government, we’re playing with people’s very lives and existence. Much as watery tarts distributing swords is no basis for a system of government⁴⁴, these systems are no basis for healthy and sustainable communities – it’s far past time that we change things to better serve human life rather than mere human tradition. Just because we’ve always done things a certain way isn’t a good argument to keep doing them that way if that way is actually hurting people. In the end not only are we failing to address the issue of slavery, but we’re failing at the question of how to merely live together. To make matters worse, our leaders certainly don’t seem capable of or even interested in leading us, all while their ingrained, prevailing cultural biases blind them to new realities emerging around us all (Kendzior, 2023; Sexton, 2023; Strieber, 2023, pp. 227-231, 256). Since I’m on this point, maybe we should revisit the wisdom of giving Young Earth creationists the power to determine who has access to highly sensitive systems based upon whether they can coerce the person seeking access into agreeing that the Earth is no more than 6,000 years old.⁴⁵

Unbrining this pickle into the cucumber it once was will, ultimately, take time, for the real solution to all of our problems is not to stop ourselves, but rather to redirect our energies. It is much like Aikido: if you try to stop something as destructive as our worst

tendencies, you won't survive. You'll be run over like a train. Trust me, I know this reality better than most. But if you redirect those same energies by even a fraction, say, five degrees to the azimuth, then the destructive potential is dispersed and you find yourself remarkably spared; the remaining energy is scattered, with more than enough creative potential left to solve all of the issues underlying the problems that we rightly agree merit our efforts.

Concluding Thoughts: A Peek Behind the Curtain

Upon review, we find that the absolute worst atrocities that we as a species are capable of committing do not continue to occur because of a “lack of political will” or “apathy” towards the issue, but rather because everyone from the lowliest peasant to the wealthiest billionaire believes that there should be exceptions to the rules for *their* specific sacred cows (Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, 2024). Yet again, we see why we've made so little progress since the passing of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000: slavery is quite useful for those who benefit from it. From this we find that we must challenge the status quo and challenge it in a way that has never been done before if we hope to change it (see Waring & Wood. 2021).

Who benefits from what aspects of which systems? Does everyone benefit, or just a certain elite group? Are there things that we can do better, systems that can be reformed, or are there entire social structures that must be doused in accelerant and burned to the ground, their ashes scattered to the four winds? Likewise, are there certain rules that make sense, such as the incest taboo, which would be foolish to throw out with the bathwater? (See Litvin, 2024; Abramson, 2023a; Malik, 2024.) If so, how can we strengthen them? To this end, nothing must be considered sacred; everything must be on the table and open to question if we are to adapt and thrive as a species.

Certainly, the medical advances we have made over the centuries are nice – I doubt anyone will suggest doing away with better treatments for children with leukemia in favor of returning to trepanation to treat the four humors – but do we really need small computers that fit in our pocket that we are all practically, if not quite literally, addicted to; gadgets that increase our anxiety when we ignore them and increase our anger and fuel depression when we look at them (Stanborough, 2019)? Do we need mere accessories and fashion statements that track our movements, provide our precise GPS location at all times, and distribute everything we do on them to mega conglomerates such as Apple, Google, TikTok, and Meta so that they in turn can sell that information to third parties who want to take even more money out of our pockets, or to state actors who, as I've shown, clearly don't have our best interests at heart? Toys that are only made possible through the ruthless enslavement of Congolese and Uyghur men, women, and children (Axbom, 2020)? Do we really need that? *Is that what “progress” really looks like?* (See Torres, 2024a; see also the discussion of qualitative versus quantitative research in Chapter 3.) Or does modern society more closely resemble that of a traumatizing, coercive cult in which these horrors have become normalized?⁴⁶ Is that what we really and truly want? In the end, isn't that the literal definition of obscurantism (Applebaum, 2025)?

When we tokenize everything – up to and including human life – as forms of digital currency⁴⁷, can we then really feign surprise every time a child is groomed by a predator over the internet, a woman is exploited on OnlyFans, private photos are uploaded to

PornHub, or a trafficker otherwise facilitates their crime through the use of such technology? Again, let's be perfectly clear: *we have done this to ourselves*. We have based our entire economy and society upon the exploitation of our fellow human beings, and then, because that obviously wasn't stupid enough, we gave the absolute worst among us the tools to make their crimes easier and more profitable to commit.⁴⁸ Now, we are left to put the genie back in the bottle all because human beings love to shoot themselves in the foot and frame some random passerby. Yet, that monster isn't going to be contained so long as we refuse to own up to the fact that it was, you know, *us* that pulled the trigger.

blind spots. We need to start listening to the voices of lived experience, as those of us on the outside looking in have clearly only made things worse. We need to listen to the voices of those living under oppression, of those who know what kept them entrapped and enslaved as well as what finally allowed them to find freedom. Survivors of the modern slave trade – and of all forms of oppression – know the answers we are seeking. They’ve been screaming the solutions at us for literally decades, if not centuries. It’s far past time that we listen and elevate these voices instead of repeating our tried and failed approaches. The author found his fancy degrees and former security clearance were meaningless next to the incredible insights such individuals provided once he learned to just shut up and listen (although admittedly, his ability to follow orders did serve him well).

Insanity, after all, is trying the same thing over and over again all while expecting a different result. Yet if I had to summarize the modern abolitionist movement, I can’t think of a better word than “insane.” The very first recognizable anti-human trafficking law in the United States, the Mann Act (notably called the “White Slave Traffic Act” before being renamed, as that was apparently too on the nose), was passed not so much to prevent trafficking as to prevent interracial marriage and intercourse between White women and Black men. The even earlier 1875 Page Act restricted immigration based upon fears of a “new” or, quite literally, a “modern day” slavery that was somehow alleged to be *worse* than historical chattel slavery which had been abolished a mere ten years prior to the Act’s passage. The Page Act centered around the alleged exploitation of White women at the hands of men of color and served as the initial point of DARVO inversion for this white supremacist talking point (Public Broadcasting Corporation; Lee, 2021). Simply put, the “anti-trafficking” movement has long been a *doublespeak* effort of talking a good game while never intending to do anything about the problem, well before the TVPA of 2000 was even conceived of.

We also really do need to start asking the hard questions, such as why those who are so concerned with casting others as demons, deviants, and pedophiles are so predictably the same people who object to outlawing child marriage. Perhaps, ultimately, we might find that it’s simply a skill issue (Onraet, et al., 2015; Hugh-Jones & Edwards, 2024; Sherkat, 2020). Such an answer would certainly explain such people’s obsession with dragging the rest of us down with them. No one ever accused the Taliban of unbridled intellectualism, after all.

It’s important to remember that this is probably going to be rough: *very* rough. We’re in for a steep learning curve, and the skills we need to develop are unlike anything else that we’ve done before. It’s not going to be like riding a bike, and I’m pretty sure it’s not going to taste exactly like chicken either. But soon, if we give ourselves a little grace and have some patience with the process, a new way of being can become reflexive; automatic, even. From there, we will only be limited by our imaginations – a problem that we should set about solving as soon as possible.

Despite the seriousness of our situation and our habit of shooting ourselves in the foot, abolition remains entirely possible, dare I say inevitable, if we take a network analysis perspective to address what is a globalized organized crime problem.⁴⁹ This is what the abolitionist must take away from this book: that it is not the structures and institutions of slavery that are the most vulnerable targets for the abolitionist, but rather the linking tissue that connects them to one another. Consider anatomy. Bones are hard

structures, rigid and inflexible, meant to give form to beings and shield the vital organs from external danger. Yet, bones stacked on top of bones will bend no more than stone stacked on top of stone. For the human body to flex and move as one, the individual bones which provide protection from danger must be connected by soft tissue. If an animal or foe seeks to cause harm to the human body, striking at the bone isn't the best method; there is a good reason why big cats and assassins alike go straight for the neck. The principle is the same here:

Target the networks, and the structure will fall.

Make no mistake, change will be hard. It will require us to accept criticism, and criticism requires us to have intellectual honesty about ourselves and our place in the world. Intellectual honesty, of course, is difficult and is the ultimate responsibility of every citizen who wishes to live in a free world. This is the final responsibility that is left to the reader as we conclude this volume: this kindling, if you will, which is to embrace what is true regardless of how it makes us feel. The sticks, the logs, the fire – that is all yet to be added. Let the embers fall where they may (Betty, 2024; Boy, 2013; Titus, 2010; see also Qur'an 32:11; BG 11:32). As for our understanding of the modern slave trade, to quote the poor stonemasons tasked with building Rome at the end of their first day, “we're nowhere close to being done.”

If there is one lesson to be taken from this chapter and from this book at large, it is this: the perpetrators of the crimes described here are quite certainly *not* demons. They are not aliens, nor are they any form of god, specter, vampire, boogeyman or monster under the bed. Despite the mind games, the elaborate rituals, the misinformation, and the psychological operations, our enemies always were, and remain, human. And just like any other human being, they can be defeated. Rarely do these mendacious human predators come from without; rather, they come from within our own communities and our own homes; they look like us, they sound like us, they speak the same language as us, they believe the same things that we do, and they may even be *us* – and telling ourselves otherwise has only prolonged the problem.

Not unrelated is the fact that in yet another, final instance of DARVO, the masterminds behind the QAnon operation must ultimately be understood to be complicit in a child trafficking ring originating in Utah from which the profits were used to fund proxy wars against Iran (Fitzwater, 1984, item 2e; Grant, 2023; McPhee, 2023; Stringwall, 2024; Stringwall, 2024a; Stringwall, 2023; Layne, 2017; Stringwall, 2024e; Stringwall, 2024h; Turkish Minute, 2021).⁵⁰

HAMAS TRAINING HUBS IN AFGHANISTAN



Figure 11.13. (Askari Media Group, 2024)

Hamas training grounds in Afghanistan as of Feb. 2023. The mastermind of the October 7 attack was not Yahya Sinwar of Hamas as commonly believed but rather Hamza bin Laden – the son of Osama bin Laden (Transatlantic Intelligence Consortium, 2024). The Taliban, heavily armed and funded by their American partners, were also deeply involved in the plotting of the October 7, 2023 massacre in Israel, as were members of the Iranian IRGC (see Footnotes 50 & 51; Prado, 2023; Transatlantic Intelligence Consortium, 2024; al-Salhy, 2024; Menachem, 2024). The IRGC connection is also relevant because the classified military intelligence given to the Russians by Donald Trump (whose administration signed the Doha agreement that returned the Taliban to power in Afghanistan) originated in, and concerned, Israel. This information was then passed from the Russians to their allies in Iran, who subsequently gave it to Hamas, which then used it to attack Israel on October 7, 2023 (Goldman, Schmitt, & Baker, 2017). Carefully consider what we've learned about the end of the Cold War to make sense of this. While many were quick to point out that the assault came on Vladimir Putin's birthday as a "gift" to the dictator for his role in facilitating the attacks, an equally significant anniversary was ignored by all but the most dedicated analysts: Operation Enduring Freedom, the American-led invasion of Afghanistan, began on October 7, 2001 (see Sweet & Toth, 2023). It is critical to understand that the bloodbath on October 7, 2023 was only the beginning. Future "attacks" against Europe and America are already in motion, justifying even further war and interventionism - hence the orchestrated nature of the fall of Kabul (See Casiano & Spent, 2024; Adams, 2024c; Archer, 2024; Naji, 2006). After all, war is great for business – and controlled opposition allows for the perception of an outsider "threat." Hamas (and others) were never part of any "resistance" axis as much as they were expendable, useful idiots ultimately serving American and Israeli interests (Mazzetti & Bergman, 2023; Rose, 2008; Stringwall, 2024m; Kortarski, 2018). In short, we have built one hell of a holy hand grenade, and it will take time for it to be completely defused. Until then, there is still a chance that we will blow ourselves up again – and for good, this time.

These operations neatly coincided with the American withdrawal from Afghanistan (Fig. 11.13), which one will find achieved five specific goals: (1) it brought to heel 75,000 Taliban fighters who would subsequently be tasked with governing 40 million desperate and hungry people following a devastating famine;⁵¹ (2) it helped destabilize Iran, given that these events occurred right on the border with the target nation; (3) it provided a means to get American personnel out of Iranian precision missile range once the actual shooting between Tehran and Tel Aviv began (see Billing, 2021; O'Connor, 2022; Shinkman, 2021; Keller, 2017; Tatum, 2022; ShiaWaves, 2024; Associated Press, 2023a; see also Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2024, p. 24; Cohen, Lillis, Bertrand, & Herb, 2023; Iran International Newsroom, 2024.); (4) it created a safe haven for Hamas to train for and plan the attacks of October 7, 2023 (Transatlantic Intelligence Consortium, 2024);⁵² and (5) it provided a staging ground for additional false flag attacks – particularly under the banner of ISIS-K – against Europe and North America to lure them into the grand war with Islam (coachlife, 2025). The reader is strongly encouraged to review Department of Defense, 2012, see Figs. 10.6 & 10.7, and note who was in charge of the Defense Intelligence Agency at the time the ISIS narrative warfare phenomenon was instigated against the Yazidis in Syria and Iraq.

The temporal convergence of other issues of importance with events in Afghanistan is also noteworthy as pertaining to technology and election security (see Edwards, 2025; Riard & Naumenko, 2021). Pat Gelsinger was forced to resign as CEO of Intel the week of the 2024 United States presidential election as he had used a manipulation of NSO Group software that he, Larry Ellison, Stewart Noyce, and Andreessen Horowitz built around an encryption flaw originally embedded by Intel and Google into processors back in 2017. The flaw, better known as Spectre/Meltdown, operated on an Ethereum-based system and served as the root kit for the NSO Group. Installed into Salesforce via a Palantir backdoor, this root kit served as the backchannel for Oracle Israel's hacking of NSA: an injection framework into Salesforce systems based upon technology stolen by Edward Snowden from the NSA and "rereleased" by Vitalik Buterin. Hence the official shuttering of Flynn's Human Terrain System (HTS) in 2014, a mere year after Snowden's defection to Russia⁵³ – for HTS was nothing more than Palantir's AI ontology that paired with the blockchain software ultimately known to the public as Ethereum.⁵⁴ The HTS – the use of which is highly connected to MAGA – is similarly highly integrated into the C7ISR system, which not so incidentally uses Palantir for its hyperscaler; when this is traced back, it runs through Marc Andreessen's and Ben Horowitz's A16Z's Ethereum lines.

Ayman Mubarak, Yoram Tal and David W. Green then leveraged their golfing friend, David Price of Oracle, to distribute this backdoor into a kernel installed on all processors at Salesforce. This backdoor is used by Wendy Turner Williams' companies to exploit personal information about voters, in turn reselling it to Oracle Israel. At Oracle Israel, a security team does what has been described as "Cambridge Analytica on steroids" with full, individualized messaging reserved though Palantir and accelerated using quantitative firm Susquehanna International Group. This group leverages neuromorphic computing attached to Raytheon breakaway Nightwing to broadcast a method which is subsequently used to dilate the cognitive window of perception using an algorithm attached to a generative adversarial network (GAN) modeled on a stochastic gradient descent.

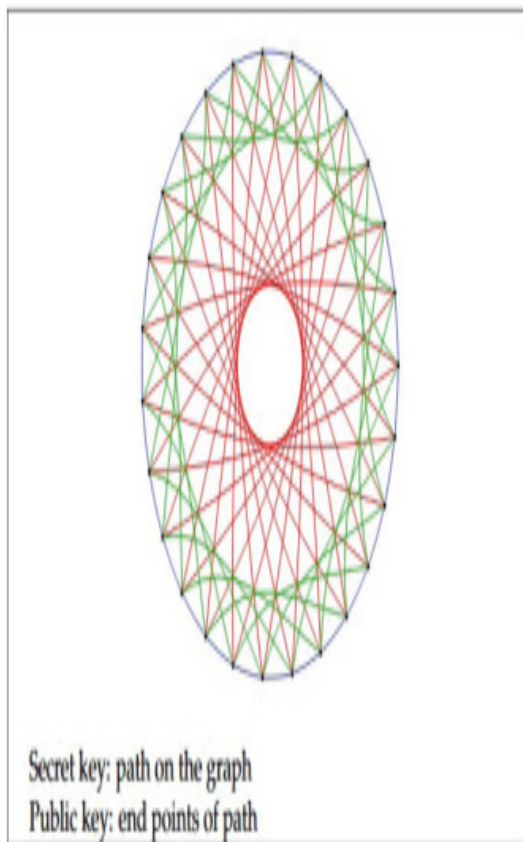


Figure 11.14. (Martindale, n.d.) *The eye of the beast.*

Pictured is a representation of the TikTok-CulstrataAI-Wagner-Susquehanna International Group-Oracle algorithm, a post-quantum cryptosystem (CSIDH) that is central to the Russian Reflective Control Network and the Chinese Cybernetic Brain. This can be directly linked to algorithmic election manipulation, including the use of NSO software to inject Polymarket manipulations into governmental statistics, as well as to regular terrorist activities and multiple vote manipulations. TikTok also played a significant role in facilitating the Wagner Group's coup of the United States, hence why Donald Trump prevented the ban on the app from going into effect upon assuming the presidency. (Source redacted)

These models are then used to tailor the entire decision-making process to the

individual, all as part of the global Palantir apartheid regime based in Moscow.^{[55](#)}

Once these advanced systems are understood, it can then be clarified that the planning for the October 2023 attack on Israel had taken place the June before in Azerbaijan, with the initial attack being funded by Russian and Iranian oil through the Oracle corporation leveraging the NSO Group. This oil was best known colloquially as the “shadow fleet,” a group of tankers with murky ownership used to circumvent sanctions and other regulations. The subsequent genocide in Palestine was funded by Ethereum futures for natural gas off the Gaza shelf. (See Link 11.2.) In a twist that should surprise absolutely no one at this point, the June 2023 Azerbaijan meeting was held by none other than Israel’s own elite Unit 8200.

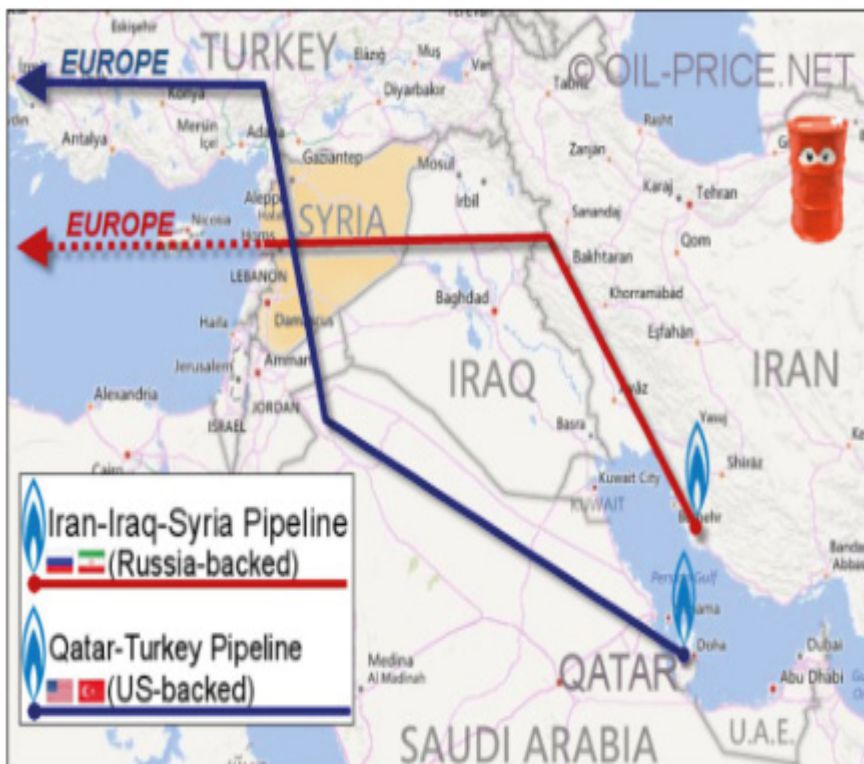


Figure 11.15. (Austin, 2015) *The Russian-backed Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline vs. the United States-backed Qatar-Saudi-Turkey pipeline plans.* Much of the nonsense described in this chapter can be traced back to competing enterprises to bring oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf to Europe. The Nabucco pipeline in northern Turkey also runs through the region connecting Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan and through areas of known trafficking networks, criminal influence operations, and genocidal actions. None of the horror experienced by these populations was about freedom, democracy, or a better future for anyone – it was about oil, and, of course, a few people’s intransigent belief about fallen angels masquerading as extraterrestrials. Let’s not forget that rather remarkable part (Redfern, 2013). Considering the price humanity has paid in blood and trauma, perhaps it’s time for a bit of real disclosure on this issue, including the relationship between alleged UAPs, so-called “alien” implants, and petroleum products, specifically as it pertains to microplastics (See ET Online, 2023; Huckins, 2023; Main, 2024; Watson, 2001; Strickland, 2017; see also Footnote 29).

In this improved context, one must understand that Afghanistan was never really a

true battlefield as much as it was a proving ground with the Taliban being carefully managed controlled opposition, always being resurrected whenever brought to the brink of annihilation. Biometric surveillance and identification technology was first tested in country by American and NATO forces, then handed over for perfection by the Taliban, before being used to control access to food and other vital resources in the Gaza concentration camps, under plans for forced relocation to Libya (McConvey, 2025). In fact, the very same private military company that controlled Bagram following the fall operated the camps in Gaza, facilitating this lethal perfection of technology for transhumanist, eugenicist interests all the way to Libya and back again to Moscow and Washington (Samuels, 2025; The Arab Weekly, 2025; TRT World and Agencies; Cole & Emmons, 2020; Ryan, 2025).⁵⁶

The importance of Afghanistan in this grand scheme cannot be overstated. The country served as a testing ground for refining the Flynn network's⁵⁷ plans and practices for the "storm" to supplement Knight of Malta Erik Prince's larger, global colonial aims. For starters, Bagram Air Force base was never truly handed over to the Taliban, but rather to Erik Prince's deniable mercenary forces as a staging ground for war with Iran (Billing, 2021; Rai, 2025). However, many of the lessons learned during the structured collapse of Kabul and the intentional stranding of numerous Afghan allies behind Taliban lines were intended to fine tune the human smuggling techniques that a large-scale human trafficking operation would require – with some books written on the matter serving as little more than civilian training manual for Prince's private citizen-staffed human trafficking network through the ever-expanding definition of "extremism" (Pineapple Press, 2025; Burns & Ward, 2025; Al Jazeera and News Agencies, 2021; Hartmann, 2025; Ryan, 2025; Bolte & Skinner, 2025).

Interestingly, it was none other than the aforementioned Ayman Mubarak himself who personally ordered the attack on the American consulate in Benghazi in 2011, resulting in the death of U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens, U.S. Foreign Service officer Sean Smith, and CIA contractors Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods (USN). It intrigues this author as to why yet another CIA-affiliated author, one who quite famously wrote a book on the 2011 consulate attack, never passed along the information of Mubarak's role in the attack after it was provided to her on December 23, 2024. That particular author's historical defense of Erik Prince's more egregious actions, combined with her lengthy history of toxic anti-immigrant rhetoric and shadowy connections to the Palantir corporation, should be carefully considered in this context (Zarnowski, 2025c).⁵⁸ Alex Jones, eat your heart out (ZeroHedge, 2025).

The planned 2025 attacks alluded to in the Fig. 11.13 caption, permitted and funded much like Hamas' October 7, 2023 attacks, alongside narratives of "Christian genocide" at the hands of Sunni Islamic extremists in Syria, were ultimately designed to "lift the veil," triggering the much-prophesized "storm" of the Flynn network/QAnon mythos. This was to bring the Judeo-Christian world into a holy war with both Shia Iran and the much larger Sunni Muslim population, as well as triggering a domestic crisis at home to justify increasing Christian nationalist authoritarian control (Webb, 2025c; Faruqi, 2025; Schaer, 2025; The New Arab Staff, 2025; Zarnowski, 2025; Zarnowski, 2025a, Zarnowski, 2025b; Zarnowski 2025c; AXactual, 2025; Health-ISAC, 2025; Adams, 2025a; Adams, 2025b; and, as the storm was upon us once more, Adams, 2025c; Snyder, 2025; Zarnowski, 2025d; see also Alestheisthenes, 2025; Sharon, 2025; Hawley, 2017; Dhume,

When the much-prophesized “storm” did finally hit in April of 2025, it was, in this author’s opinion, a tad bit disappointing: it’s not as if the author himself had presented vast evidence of not merely war crimes but outright genocide by the Taliban at the International Criminal Court in the Hague three years prior to the lackluster report of this month (see Askari Media Group, 2025). The *best laid plans*, as they say.⁵⁹

One should also be careful not to overlook the narrative warfare element present in Afghanistan and the subsequent American retreat. A colleague that the author worked with to evacuate Afghan commandos after the fall of Kabul summed up the evacuation efforts thusly, after noting that many of the “Task Force” organizations set up to assist Afghan allies were “all talk” and did “less than nothing in the way of action,”

"I don't want to downplay anyone's efforts, but I'd say a lot of Afghan Evac's messaging was designed like irregular warfare style destabilizing propaganda used to attack Biden and take back power for Trump."

With this in mind, the subsequent termination of Operation Enduring Welcome and the ending of temporary protected status for over 1,600 vetted Afghan allies and their families in the early days of the second Trump administration begin to make more sense, especially as the administration welcomed White South Afrikaans under the guise of racially persecuted refugees. The colleague continued, and their statement is repeated here (with permission), edited only slightly for clarity and to protect the identities of this colleague and innocent journalists. "Sadat" is Lt. Gen. Sami Sadat, former Deputy Commander of the Afghan Armed Forces. Certain other persons have been assigned contrived initials.

"It's my opinion, based on my observations and personal experience, regardless of how much you promoted and supported many of the most prominent evacuation handlers, influencers, and soldier celebrities, Afghan celebrities, it seemed like many task forces most often asked for help or support, but when you directly said 'how may I be of service,' the answer was, 'cash.'

[Redacted] interview of Sadat was a farce. He [Sadat] was clearly out of his depth. When I saw the messaging and met with or talked to his organization it was all nonsense. He messaged against Biden while he was president. It's a very strange thing to do, to message against a sitting president whom you need to support you while he's president. So he [Sadat] lobbied against him [Biden] in public.

My feeling is some folks are cooperating at some level of how to message and how to use strategy we teach people in irregular warfare. [AS] openly spoke about her “team of teams approach” with Evac, she met with [OB] (he openly shared that). It always felt to me like [MS]⁶⁰, [AS], and Shawn Ryan were working on propaganda about borders. The stories about Afghans were all designed to discredit Biden and deflect blame from Trump.

I think [OB] is self-serving a bit but sincere – but he's certainly one of the folks they are mentoring.⁶¹

Do I think that they are working together? Yes, pretty clearly and openly

they are – Shawn Ryan and [AS] both served in CIA, both in Benghazi (according to public statements).⁶² Shawn Ryan admitted to living in Colombia and basically said he was working in drug trafficking – which is a very strange thing to disclose (he said that in the former Fox News host interview with Megan Kelly.)

[MS] didn't even know [redacted] – he was there in 08' – [redacted] served almost the whole damn war. [MS] is far from an Afghanistan expert or leading authority. The State Department flew him to Vienna for an Afghanistan conference – since when does the government fly retired soldiers to diplomatic conferences?

All of this they openly and proudly disclosed, so I'm not telling tales out of school. However, when you add the association of Erik Prince with his logistics support in Evac, and now these plane flights he was said to have provided, the whole thing looks like it was an irregular warfare campaign. And if I can see that – they don't care who knows.

So maybe it's just their manner, by having done this work in the past, but [AS] and [MS] advise these groups (according to all of them). She worked under [Darrell] Issa and Jim Jordan in the Benghazi hearings from what people told me about her (although I can't verify that)⁶³ she believes in Q conspiracies like PizzaGate (again, I can't verify this).⁶⁴

My guess is they are all pretty much, Christian nationalist and some are QAnon. Who knows? I feel it's curious, too, that General Flynn lives an hour from Tampa, [MS]'s home base. There are many possibilities – might be CIA running active op, might be ex-CIA running off-the-books op, might be Christian nationalist, might be QAnon. May be a rogue element working secretly inside of our government like on January 6th – it feels to me like the new January 6th.

I don't think that group is wholly on board with the good old Constitution and Bill of Rights. [MS] told me once he wants to have task forces approved by the state with "total autonomy." Think for a minute about that. How can a task force, which by definition is deputized, vetted, funded, and tasked by the government, have total autonomy? But it seems like these task forces for ICE are doing things pretty much with autonomy.

[MS], from what Afghans say, was just another officer of no real consequence who was there for a while. He was not a central figure or important Afghanistan expert. He was emotionally wounded by his village stability ops being scrapped, and he has an axe to grind. That's my impression – he slow rolls it for the press with a slow, southern "aw, shucks" drawl but listen carefully to him over time: it's all right wing, fear mongering and tactics used to influence. Like, for example, the irregular warfare campaign like General Flynn cooked up at work.

Knowing us – they are all working for us, on the clock right now. I saw the material about Sadat's incompetence, so I can testify that guy should not be running anything – he's a fake general and he's hated among [Afghan] fighting men for how incompetent he was.⁶⁵ So him being the titular head of any intel movement is ill-advised in my honest opinion.

Adam, this is a very dangerous time in our country because unless you're in with these people, in their inner circle, you cannot really make any assumptions or really know if any of them are on the up and up. My feeling is Moral Compass [Foundation] is pure politics designed to hurt Biden – every narrative was a version of that. "Tito" is a good man, I can't see him doing something illegal; he's a solid guy but his organization is just messages and mostly politics. Task Force Argo – they did less than 300 cases in three years according to postings so how could NOLB [No One Left Behind] do 33,000 plus? To me, there are three effective organizations: Afghan Evac, NOLB, and GFA [Global Friends of Afghanistan], but I would point out coincidentally that [HJ] worked for General Flynn's brother – the general, before. But again, a guy like him – I can't see him breaking laws or going rogue.

There was also some corruption and graft among on-the-ground groups charging people to get them out – charging them fees in guest houses and safe houses. This stuff was approved and sanctioned by us at some level. So they were acting inside of government during the fall. After the fall, I felt it shift – it seemed slow and deliberate. So, could some of these folks be QAnon, Jan 6 types? YES. Are many Christian nationalists who know people like Kash Patel? Yeah. Are [AS], [MS] and [OB] all about what's happening now? I would say that's a yes.⁶⁶

Does it mean anything? Join the Proud Boys yourself and find out brother [laughing]. I would bet some of these so-called "deputized" ICE agents are Proud Boys or other border groups of "patriots." I'm just an ordinary patriot – I was happy with law-and-order [laughing].

Honestly it scares the shit out of me, but what can I do? It's not my thing to find out and even if I proved anything, it would not matter. By the way, [MS]'s show wrapped in Tennessee – in Shawn's hometown. That is also where Tenet Media⁶⁷ was located in Tennessee, too, huh – probably all just a coincidence. Also, [CD] was there too, who is friendly with Kash Patel.⁶⁸ Huh. Weird. Oh yeah, and [OB] and [CD] were there too, by the way.

That Tennessee group... I would focus on them if I was a guy like you. But honestly, they run things here, so do it at your own risk, and don't involve me please. I resigned myself to the fact that they are so open about everything they really feel, if they are doing anything shady, that they have total immunity and can act with impunity. And I would say that's right.

Who knows, I stopped caring about all those people and found guys committed to the work. But [MS] has used it to great advantage for what he's doing now, and he saved this [MS] "version" for now. I honestly would not even touch this if I were you. Too much risk, too little reward – and no one will support you in government who wants their job tomorrow."

The colleague then texted the author an image of Lt. Gen. (ret.) Michael Flynn, appearing live on Alex Jones' Info Wars⁶⁹ at that very moment before concluding,

"I don't think it will be too hard to crack the case (laughing). He basically says in plain English, with Kash, Bongino, Bondi and Trump and then others that are involved in some of these... [trails off] It's remarkable. No shame in his [Flynn's] game whatsoever. Talking about QAnon, secret sealed indictments⁷⁰, targeting Comey – he has no fear whatsoever."

It appears that, during the author's communications, the serpent decided to reveal himself in full form: in fact, he even took a bow.⁷¹ Rev. 12:9.⁷² What I would have done for a storm god's hammer in that precise moment is perhaps best left unsaid.

As horrifying as this reality is, these revelations fit into a much larger pattern wherein survivors of child sexual abuse are being further exploited and groomed to advance extremist far-right narratives against Islam (Matharu, 2024). (See Adams, 2024b; Adams, 2024d; Archer, 2024a; Archer, 2024b; Naji, 2006; van Linge, 2024; Zaino, 2024a; Rifal, 2024; Zaino, 2024b; Woland, 2024; Swain, 2024; Webb, 2025; Webb, 2025a for how the ground is being shaped for the narrative of this future conflict; see also Flynn, 2025; Berg, 2024a; Challen, 2025; Home Office, 2020, p. 8 for an example of these narratives and how they relate to the topic of sexual violence and human trafficking per the panic over "grooming gangs.") The ultimate goal of this multinational network is thus made perfectly clear: to remove all the protective mechanisms against childhood adversity and weaponize the resulting trauma against a very specific political opponent. (See Fink, 2025; Kong, Fraser, Elwina, and Ruffman, 2024; Hazkani & Sorek, 2025; Samuels, 2025; Wong, 2025. See also p. 103 in Dans & Groves, 2023, listed here in Chapter 11 materials of Appendix 1.)

There is, regrettably, one more thing that I should mention, and it is quite unfortunately a big deal. Death camps are back (Fig. 11.16; Human Rights Watch, 2022; Current Time, Donbas.Realities, & Shtekel, 2022). I know because I've seen them with my own eyes. What's more is the fact that this, too, was completely and utterly preventable had we chosen to take notice (Hartmann, 2023). As a certain, beloved former supervisor of mine was fond of saying, "*That's not ideal*. That's definitely not ideal. In fact, y'all should probably look into doing something about that – preferably soon." The clock is ticking, and with awareness comes responsibility (see Barnes, Diffenbaugh, & Seneviratne, 2025).



Figure 11.16. (Sze, W. & Li, E., 2024; Google Earth photo.) *Auschwitz perfected.* Big-C communists love talking about the equal distribution of wealth until they want more for themselves, at which point they turn to organized crime and capitalism. Managed by Chinese-sponsored organized crime rings, facilities like the one pictured here (known as “KK Park”, in Myanmar) can house thousands of victims (Vu, 2024; McCready & Mendelson, 2023). If one has ever been on the receiving end of an internet scam or suspicious text, the scammer was likely forced to commit the act at one of these camps under penalty of starvation, torture, or even death. These facilities double as live organ harvesting facilities (Unknown, 2022). Workers who do not meet quotas or who succumb to the barbaric conditions also subsequently have their organs harvested. Similar to other countries examined, China has a lengthy history of eugenics that drives human trafficking (Lund, 2020). The connection to Elon Musk’s criminal empire should not be overlooked (West, 2025; Podkul, 2025). See also Yaron, 2024.

Whether we’ll accept that responsibility is yet to be seen. For the time being, at least,

the global grip of Jörgenrandr is apparent, and we have actually come full circle in our analysis with the money trail described earlier in this section tying right back to where the author's involvement with this subject truly began: a polygamist compound just outside San Angelo, Texas. From this juncture, some horrors are best left to the reader to piece together lest they sense that the author is being too sensationalistic or conspiratorial.⁷³ In closing, while many in the anti-trafficking movement have been shown to be dangerous and even potentially unhinged grifters, one must remember that even a stopped clock is right twice a day (Bleu, 2022; see also Sommer, Briquelet, Weill, & Kirsch, 2023; N., 2023).

As a man I greatly respect noted as he gazed out over the ruins of the once vibrant city of Sarajevo in the mid 1990s, the narcissistic veneer of civilization is razor thin. It is up to each and every single one of us to birth a new world – for in the end, we find that the way we do anything is the way we do everything (Watson, 2001).

¹ This is an area prime for future research; in fact, I know there's an abundance of data on this issue (See Wilkinson, 2004). *Hint hint.*

² Nation states prioritize both nationalism and control over community, resulting in increased vulnerability of large populations who may not even be stated enemies. The usefulness of nation states in a globalized world must be re-examined, particularly as migration has become weaponized and plays a significant role in trafficking. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is of particular interest in considering the subject of national identity. It is important to note that the formation of both Israeli and Palestinian group/national identity cannot simply be reduced to a matter of settler colonialism (Khalidi, 1997; Gold, 2021; Oren, 2010). The role of personal and cultural narratives in the formation of these identities cannot be overstated, nor can the role of a population's sense of collective trauma and memory (Bashir & Goldberg, 2018; Hammack, 2010; Hirschberger, 2018; Hirschberger, Pyszczynski, & Ein-Dor, 2010). Implications for global peacemaking can arise from study of this particular conflict. It may be that individuals such as Benjamin Netanyahu and Yahya al-Sanwar are created more than they are born, but that's a topic for the next volume.

³ This shouldn't come as much of a revelation: our world is a closed, finite system. What happens to one part of that system affects the rest of the system. This is precisely why it is so important to *accurately* understand how the parts interact: a butterfly flapping its wings in San Francisco can cause a crisis in the Middle East. On this note, one should consider a deep dive into the intelligence cult that is Salesforce – one might even find the trigger mechanism behind a series of unfortunate events. Also consider the sheer data mining potential that this software can leverage – social service organizations, NGOs, hospitals, medical providers, and financial institutions all use Salesforce software.

⁴ “The white liberal differs from the white conservative in only one way: the liberal is more deceitful than the conservative. Both want power, but the white liberal is the one who has perfected the art of posing as the Negro's friend and benefactor.” – Malcolm X

⁵ Quoted in Zaino, 2024.

⁶ First and foremost, I have additional information, but as I mentioned in the introduction, I am keeping some cards close to my vest in order to protect myself should I be given any sort of trouble over this publication. Second, and perhaps most importantly, as one of my best mentors once told me, “Too much enlightenment too quickly can make you go crazy.” 1 John 4:16.

⁷ It is worth looking into the Bush Dynasty's Project Hammer, the Putin connection, resulting connections to the events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent Global War on Terror, especially in the Middle East. (Unknown, 1994; Spingola, 2010; Seeshell, 2022; Schindler & the XXX Committee, 2014; Stringwall, 2024f; Golden, 2024; Hettena, 2023; Klarenberg, 2023; Stewartson, 2024g; Singh, 2024a; Proust, 2024). See Appendix 1, Fig. 11.13, and Fig. 11.15. Once the Saudi, Russian, and Israeli networks and laundries are understood, note the similarities and patterns that arise between the events of September 11, 2001, Operation Timber Sycamore,

October 7, 2023. The Kissinger-bian Laden connection is particularly interesting and merits further scrutiny. The events discussed similarly reek of Operation Northwoods, to which there is a surprising connection (see Fig. 11.13 and Appendix 1 materials for this chapter).

⁸ The current head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, is similarly a former officer of the KGB (Euronews & AFP, 2023).

⁹ Moreover, who would have been a better stagehand to pull off such a deception than someone who had been on the inside of such an evil empire? 2 Corinthians 11: 13-15.

¹⁰ The reader is wise to also consider the timeframe that Bezmenov outlined for his process of ideological subversion, with the starting date set to his 1983 appearance.

¹¹ Other nations, faiths, and institutions must also consider the ramifications of this revelation and investigate if they, too, have similarly been compromised (See Link 11.5.). See the supplementary materials for this chapter in Appendix 1 for starting points.

¹² “You see, the useful idiots – the leftists who are idealistically believing in the beauty of Soviet socialist or communist or whatever system – when they get disillusioned, they become the worst enemies. That’s why my KGB instructors specifically made the point: ‘Never bother with leftists. Forget about these political prostitutes. Aim higher.’ This was my instruction. Try to get into large circulation, established conservative media, reach filthy rich movie makers, intellectuals, so-called academic circles. Cynical, egocentric people who can look into your eyes with angelic expression and tell you a lie. These are the most recruitable people: people who lack moral principles, who are either too greedy or suffer from self-importance. They feel that they matter a lot. These are the people who KGB wanted very much to recruit.” Yuri Bezmenov, 1984, quoted in Zheng, 2024.

¹³ Televangelist Pat Robertson was also an asset of the Agency and is pictured on the front page of Issue 27 the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, reviewing Contra soldiers in Nicaragua (see Covert Action Publications Inc., 1987 in Appendix 1 materials for this chapter).

¹⁴ The cryptocurrency route through which Shin Bet launders Russian FSB blackmail money to the IIB is central to the shadowy alliance that exists between the Putin and Netanyahu regimes, and is key to how the events of October 7, 2023 were ultimately triggered (see Grant, 2023; Sweet & Toth, 2023; Schindler & the XX Committee, 2014; Fig. 11.13). In late 2019, Israel revealed it had an agreement with Russia not to sell arms to Ukraine and Georgia in exchange for Russia not arming Iran (MEMO, 2019; see also Stringwall, 2024n). Israel has also supplied at least \$853 million in drones to Russia, including at least one that was downed by the Ukrainian military in 2014 and two in 2015 (Fater, 2010; Sputnik, 2012; Nikolsky, 2015).

¹⁵ Of course, one must remember that the sins of the father are not the sins of the son, especially when the son has gone out of his way to condemn his family for their crimes and dissociate himself entirely from them. With this in mind, Mossad should probably be aware that the grandson of a certain World War I ace and Nazi war criminal has recently reached out to say “hello.” I know what you bastards did to his children via your Indo-Pacific trafficking rings. I’m sure the governments of Thailand, Australia, and others will be interested in what I have to show them. People who live in glass bunkers really shouldn’t throw GBU-57’s. The connection to the Musk empire should not be overlooked (Reddick, 2025).

¹⁶ This certainly makes one wonder what went on at Elon’s Kung Fu practice with Maxwell, given both Musk’s and Maxwell’s father’s close – dare I say *intimate* – relationship with both regimes.

¹⁷ Missouri is an epicenter of transnational trafficking networks across the United States, and investigators would be prudent to focus their efforts on this nexus of criminality - especially in the St. Louis area (Hayes, 2023; Gould, 2024; Gould, 2024a; Office of Public Affairs, 2024a; St. Louis Magazine, 2024; FLOODLIT, 2024). The events of 2014 in Ferguson are also of particular interest and should be carefully examined in this context (see Troy, 2024a; Everson, 2018; Headlee, 2017; Garland, 2023a; Garland, 2024; Garland, 2023b; Garland, 2023c; Team Ebony, 2014; Garland, 2024d). I cannot stress enough that American law enforcement is not merely compromised but is actively complicit in these atrocities (Holman, 2024).

¹⁸ There is a much deeper connection to the Epstein network as well as to the KGB's role in these operations centering around North Fox Island, but that is not the author's story to tell (Cain, 2019; Flowers & Prawat, 2019).

¹⁹ This connection to ISIS is particularly relevant, given how Canadian, Dutch, and British intelligence were involved in trafficking fifteen-and-sixteen-year-old girls to Syria to serve as "brides" for ISIS fighters (Baker, 2022; Sandford & Durbin, 2022; Mitchell, 2022; McQuade, 2023). It is important to understand that ISIS was not merely an invention of "the West" as it was also utilized, and carefully protected by, Russia until the fall of Assad in Syria (Kasparov, 2024; Archer 2024c). Once again, Michael Flynn's complicity with Russia is essential to understanding how the narrative warfare of ISIS' appeal spread so rapidly.

²⁰ See Myers, 2024 for the connection between "elder" Ballard mentioned in Luv, 2024 and Tim Ballard of Operation Underground Railroad fame. Chapter 11 materials found in Appendix 1 illustrate the critical influence that end times Mormon theology had on Tim Ballard and the machinations of Operation Underground Railroad. Also note the role of ideology in descriptions of "satanic" child abuse and the rationalization of the debunked Satanic Panic's conspiracy theory as being plausibly the work of a mysterious sect of Satanists rather than that of Christian Church elders who use structures of authority and power to abuse and exploit others (Luv, 2024). The Ballards' adoption foundation specialized in pairing Haitian children with Mormon couples and should be thoroughly investigated, as should its partnership with the Clinton Foundation (Carlos Slim Helú, a partner of the foundation, helped fund *Sound of Freedom*), Ballard's use of the Standard Hotel in Miami, his trips to Fisher Island, and the proximity of these places to P. Diddy's Miami crib (Unknown, 2024). See also Riggs, 2024; Riggs, 2024a.

²¹ To further debunk this claim, recall the discussion in chapters 4 and 6 of just how many children actually go missing each year, most of whom are recovered safe and alive. Does it make sense to claim that even *more* people are ritualistically sacrificed without a trace than the number who go missing?

²² This is not to say that it is the *teachings* of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad are the problem, far from it, but rather that, as Nietzsche once said, "the *practice* of the Church is hostile to life."

²³ This is a surprisingly common pattern that repeats throughout history, and should be further studied (see Richardson, 2022). As Dr. Jeffrey J. Kripal, a professor of comparative religion at Rice University has noted, "It must be said that all conspiracy theories – both reasonable and unreasonable – express a most basic fact about the human condition that is well known in the humanities, a fact that grounds all of them: namely, that all of us at every moment *are* being duped, *are* being tricked by our languages, our cultures, our religions, and, alas, by our very minds. Every culture is a trance state. Every ego is a cultural production. Every text is a historical construction. Every perception is akin to a dream. Is not this proposed truth the ultimate conspiracy theory? Am I a conspiracy theorist?" Quoted in Strieber & Kripal, 2017; p. 318.

²⁴ Christianity, it must be understood, is fundamentally antisemitic in a way no other theology is: the entire point of Christianity was a rejection of Judaism. Indeed, the transformation of *Judenhaas* from religious persecution to a more intense, racialized form of antisemitism came largely at the hands of Catholic presses, which of course took their marching orders from none other than the Vatican itself (Kertzer, 2001). Kertzer, 2001 notes that the Vatican was motivated by its own loss of status in the modern world, and in turn blamed this loss on the citizenship and equal rights that had been granted to Jewish people, a distinct pattern that continues into the present. With this in mind, it's important to put the original source documentation into context. Bicheno, 1807 argued that a "Jewish Restoration" would bring about the second coming of Christ, which would expedite their transfer to what Bicheno euphemistically referred to as "their future destination": AKA, hell (Bicheno, 1807; p. 32). The antisemitic root of core Mormon theology should also be similarly examined, particularly given revelations at the conclusion of the chapter (see Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2024). See also Marsh, 2024.

²⁵ This becomes all the more obvious when one considers intergenerational trauma and cycles of violence: hurt people, as the saying goes, hurt people. However, that is an examination best saved for the next volume.

²⁶ For the record and to nip any speculation in the bud, the author does not take a stance as to what Unexplained Aerial Phenomena (UAP) are – the concern here is with the impact that beliefs *about* UAP have on the human condition.

²⁷ “If we don’t make some changes, there’s going to be some major disasters about to happen. And it’s man-made... She said there are people in power, and I’m not going to say where... but they are scripting the book of Revelations to bring about Armageddon and the end of the world. And doing it intentionally.” – Chris Bledsoe, quoted in Shawn Ryan Show, 2025.

²⁸ In full disclosure, the author has worked with both Shawn Ryan and Sarah Adams, the latter of whom became involved in the conversation about this incident. As evidence that not all was as it seemed about this incident, the author points to an interaction between Adams and another individual named frequently in this book mere days before Ryan released his “bombshell” podcast: I recall someone being cautioned to beware an all-seeing “Oracle.” Interesting word choice, isn’t it? See also Webb, 2025a.

²⁹ If there is anything in the world that the public needs disclosure about, it is the intricacies of the Human Terrain System, developed and implemented by the Department of Defense in Afghanistan. This dark reality reminds the author of the discussion in the Introduction of Eisenhower’s words upon discovering the Nazi death camps, for there are some horrors so profane that they must be seen to be believed. The reader is encouraged to research who was placed in charge of this program. See Fig. 11.15; Chapter 9, footnote 17. In the interest of full transparency, the author’s late wife was the original whistleblower on the subject; a matter which cost her her life.

³⁰ Timothy McVeigh was also stationed at Ft. Liberty (then called Ft. Bragg) prior to committing the Oklahoma City bombing. Tulsi Gabbard, fan of Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad, also taught at Ft. Liberty. I’m sure that’s completely unrelated to the topic at hand.

³¹ To be clear, we’re speaking about narratives *surrounding* UAP, not UAP itself.

³² In Hurley, 2021, it is worth examining whether the referenced Brazil cases have any connection to the syndicate of João Teixeira de Faria.

³³ The Trump Organization serves as a lesser, third mafia through which the main two interact.

³⁴ Hence how the antisemitism of QAnon was a feature, not a bug. It served not only as the cognitive grease allowing it spread among “good people” and hardened antisemite alike, but also as a freeing mechanism for organized crime. While the reality remains that it is not “the Jews” but rather a very specific crime family, much as it wasn’t “the Italians” but rather Al Capone’s Chicago Outfit, the weaponization of antisemitism allowed Likud to commit atrocities while dismissing any legitimate criticism as old-fashioned Jew-hate. To this point, I am also unaware of any member of the Likud organization imbibing children’s blood or otherwise engaging in ritual child sacrifice. One is reminded of the Japanese ninja who historically dressed up as mythical beings such as the tengu to perform magical, terrifying acts against superstitious samurai such as breathing fire and turning into animals. The trick added to the mystique and popular myth of the ninja operatives, and any samurai who encountered them later thought twice about fighting them, fearing they were up against not mere mortal men but rather supernatural beings.

³⁵ Quoted from Mann, 2019.

³⁶ Consider also why we have a King James “version” of the Bible, why masses were held in Latin when no one spoke the language, and that whole Shia/Sunni thing that has cost millions of Muslim lives.

³⁷ Then again, perhaps not.

³⁸ Ethereum is the second largest cryptocurrency after Bitcoin.

³⁹ Ezra Cohen-Watnick, Trump's Under Secretary for Defense following the 2020 elections (leading up to and during January 6, 2021), is Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn's Israeli handler (Bloom, 2024; Garland, 2024b). Cohen-Watnick is closely connected to Larry Ellison and Safra Catz of Oracle fame. He is also directly connected to Miriam Adelson and Reza Pahlevi, the eldest son of the Iranian Shah (Mrspanstreppon, 2024). Russia's Wagner Group is also closely integrated into Oracle. While I haven't played chess in a while, I believe this part is called "checkmate."

⁴⁰ Oracle Israel's operations, in cooperation with Mark Zuckerberg's Meta, are also directly connected via Stewart Noyce to Lavender AI, which was used by Israel to intentionally exterminate entire families and genealogical lines in Gaza (Abraham, 2024; Biggar, 2024).

⁴¹ Again, the reader is encouraged to review Pearce & Parncutt, 2023 and Lenton, et al. 2023 which state that 1.5-2 degrees C of global warming will result in one billion dead and two billion displaced by 2100. Of course, these are anticipated to be gross underestimates given the likely rise of global temperatures by *four* degrees Celsius by 2100, and eight degrees Celsius by 2200; and even this is only the beginning (Wikowski, et al., 2024). Human beings, it must be noted, are estimated to only be able to survive five degrees of temperature rise. What's worse is that this appears to have been planned: and it has been *the* plan for a long time (see Speth, 2021; Cohn, 2024). There is a reason why widespread violence is being normalized and slavery deemed acceptable once again, with implications ranging from abortion politics to adoption and even genocide: three things that are intricately connected and will become even more so in the years ahead (Goodkind, 2024). See also Riggs, 2024; Riggs, 2024a.

⁴² All religions are technically cults by definition, absent the negative connotation of the word (McNeil, 2023).

⁴³ "The Agency is family."

⁴⁴ England is weird (Medieval Chronicles).

⁴⁵ Once again, I feel obligated to state, "yes, this also actually happened." See Elizondo, 2024; pp. 38, 80-93 for more examples.

⁴⁶ This is critical: I am not accusing anyone of anything: instead, *all* civilizations, cultures, and organizations function as low intensity, mass scale cults complete with mechanisms of coercive control (Tyrrell, 1993; Cain, 2023). The implications for democracy and human liberation are massive (Levine, 1981). Every element of the social psychology of cults is present in everyday mainstream society to some degree. Thus, to bring about healthier societies, we must think outside of our own cults and groupthink. One distinct possibility is the use of "Red Cells" first pioneered by the Navy and subsequently adopted by the CIA (see Zenko, 2015).

⁴⁷ In certain clandestine circles, cryptocurrency "smart contracts" are referred to as "space lasers," as are the mechanics behind Havana Syndrome (Grind & Twohey, 2025). With Grind & Twohey, 2025 in context, and for establishment of a proper timeline, it is important to note that a senior Republican Senator left on October 3, 2024 to meet with the Oracle corporation to discuss (arrange?) the outcome of the 2024 U.S. elections. The author has it on very good authority that the same Senator is mentioned repeatedly in the Epstein files. Smart contracts are simple: pay X to get Y, where X and Y can be anything from mere cash and commodities to world events, assassinations, or human beings. See Hamilton, 2024 for how such tools might be operationalized. Understanding this, one should consider the dynamics of DARVO in the rhetoric of rigging elections – it's almost as if the mob knows how to make money by rigging a fight (see Schwartz, 2024; Folk, 2024; Knight, 2024; Disassembler, 2024; Silver, 2024; InteractivePolls, 2024). As for the actual rigging, they seem to be less competent, getting caught almost immediately; and no, Starlink was not involved, but rather APT38 and Oracle (see Ulmer & Layne, 2022; Butler, 2024; Johnson, 2024; Garland, 2024c; Spoonamore, 2024; Garland, 2024d; Greenhalgh, 2024; Donald, 2024; Groeneveld, 2024c; Zane, 2024). It would be very interesting, and unfortunate, if there had been an NSA-authorized forensic audit of the 2024 presidential election showing Kamala Harris, not Donald Trump, to be the winner – an audit which the Democratic Party itself scuttled. (Murmurtoad, 2024; tshirtatalowprice.com, 2024; Footnote 4) . As for Havana Syndrome, investigators should focus on the connection to blockchain technology and smart contracts – as well as where all the infrastructure for this technology is housed and through which FSB blackmail is routed (see Greenberg, 2024; Dobrokhotov, Grozev, & Weiss, 2024).

Once the smart contract relationship was understood, and as much as it pains the author to admit, one can see that both Code Pink and Marjorie Taylor Greene were right – albeit for completely wrong reasons (Tress, 2025). Instead of a laser beamed from space, the smart contract simply overheated some particularly vulnerable infrastructure systems, sparking a wildfire.

⁴⁸ The reader has three guesses as to what piece of technology traffickers rely upon the most to recruit and control their victims, and the first two don't count (Remington, 2016; Sarkar, 2015; Gezinski & Gonzalez-Pons, 2022). It is also the single most important piece of evidence to seize and search in a human trafficking investigation.

⁴⁹ I am talking about looking at the greater phenomenon of human trafficking, if not all of capitalism (and big-C Communism), from the *perspective* of it being a global transnational organized crime network – I am emphatically *not* arguing for using the established legal/penal system to reform the very system that gave us this problem in the first place. There is a difference.

⁵⁰ Most westerners regard the Shah as the rightful ruler of Iran; indeed, a significant portion of the plan to replace the Islamic regime in Tehran involves restoring the Shah's autocratic dynasty to power (See Rohit, 2024). However, the Shah only originally came to power following a CIA-sponsored coup against Iran's first democratically elected president in 1953; a coup whose purpose was primarily to protect British oil interests, most notably that which became the corporation known as British Petroleum (BP). BP and other British oil interests' investments in Israeli oil just prior to the attack of October 7 and subsequent genocide in Gaza should be considered in this context (Elmah, 2024; Wrobel, 2023; Walker, 2023; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2019). The similarities to the Shah's rise to power in 1953 and the way Hamas came to power should also be noted (Rose, 2008). The wars/genocides in Palestine and Lebanon are best understood as expansions of the CIA's operation Timber Sycamore, of which the presidency of Donald Trump, QAnon, the events of January 6, and Project 2025 are also a part (Stringwall, 2024g; Stringwall, 2024h). The Khamenei regime was installed as a price control mechanism on oil when the British and Americans realized that they could provide a nearly unlimited amount of energy, completely undermining most known economic principles of the time. Hence also why the Trump junta *initially* refused to allow Netanyahu to assassinate the Ayatollah in June of 2025. Had that happened, markets would have crashed due to the influx of cheap oil. Once again, the implications are apparent: global leadership functions like one big, organized crime network, with various mob bosses that go to war with each other from time to time. Every so often, they "mow the lawn" in a war or genocide, as it preserves the status quo and is good for business. Occasionally, one mafioso feels so entitled that they go for it all, ultimately revealing the larger game: it's really all a carefully controlled illusion. In rejecting this dreamworld, in openly rebelling against this system that has been chosen for and forced upon us, we have nothing to lose but our chains. (See Redacted, 2025.)

⁵¹ Yes, they knew the famine would occur. It was part of the plan: the United States and her allies spent two decades transforming a largely agrarian economy into a modern, high-tech economy. In turn, an entire generation lost the ability to tend the land. This resulted in the country becoming dependent on foreign aid just to feed itself: at the time of the fall of Kabul, half of the World Food Program's grain came directly from Ukraine, which was blockaded at the moment it was most needed (see Lincoln, 2020; Stringwall, 2024n). Ukraine was essentially offered up for Russian conquest in exchange for the desired holy war against Iran and Islam, a blood sacrifice to Putin by the Saudi, Emirati, Israeli, and American cartels (Stringwall, 2024d; DeBatto, 2023; Pelton, 2024; Stringwall, 2024f; Adams, 2024a; Stringwall, 2024n). Biden's "cowardice" in the face of Russian aggression combined with his unwavering support for Israel as the country engaged in open genocide takes on a far more sinister and calculating glare once this is understood. (See Zarnowski, 2025e.)

⁵² In alignment with a U.S. government agreement with the United Nations, the U.S. transferred \$2.1 billion in cash to the Taliban-controlled central bank of Afghanistan (Da Afghanistan Bank, or DAB) over the course of three years. These transfers were made with the understanding that the funds would subsequently be moved to the Afghan International Bank (AIB), upon request by the UN, to support humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. These funds were allocated among UN entities operating in Afghanistan, with the UN Development Program (UNDP) overseeing disbursements through the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan. In March 2022, the UNDP's Afghanistan office transferred \$22 million in cash from this trust fund to a representative of Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) in Afghanistan (UNDP Afghanistan, 2022). IRW, a UK-based charity, is designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the UAE, and Bangladesh. Abdullah al-Dardari, a Syrian national, served as the UNDP Country Representative for Afghanistan from 2020 to 2023. He is a lifelong associate of the Assad family, including Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his brother Maher al-Assad, who headed the Syrian Republican Guard. Dardari's father served Syrian military as Head of Operations for the Syrian Military during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Umair Hasan, the Pakistani national overseeing IRW operations in Afghanistan, has close ties to both the Taliban and Qatari interests. To date, there is no accounting for the \$22 million transferred to IRW in Afghanistan; the funds are neither reflected in IRW's annual report nor documented in any public records of expenditures within Afghanistan. It is important to note that this \$22 million in American funds is in addition to the money that the Israeli government funneled to Hamas through intermediaries in Qatar (Mazzetti & Bergman, 2023).

⁵³ An often overlooked motivation behind Snowden's actions is the presence of beliefs in white supremacy; the same theme appears in the background of Glenn Greenwald and Julian Assange (see Wilentz, 2014). The relevance is of particular importance in this context.

⁵⁴ This system appears to still be in operation, remaining deeply connected to Israeli intelligence.

⁵⁵ The subservience of the Trump/Vance administration to the Kremlin overlords can be directly traced through Peter Thiel's Founders Fund.

⁵⁶ This is a pertinent time for the reader to revisit the connection between the eugenics aspects of apartheid South Africa's Project Coast and the connection to such DNA warehouses such as 23andMe (see also Mehrotra, 2025; Bamford, 2024; Frenkel & Krolik, 2025; Duehren & Kang, 2025; Shelton, et al., 2020; Link 11.5).

⁵⁷ Note Flynn acolyte Lara Logan's central appearance in (Janzen, 2025) and the presence of Laura Loomer in (Miller, 2025). See also Fig. 11.7. It should be noted that this network has been implicated, with high confidence, in the assassination of a CIA officer near Kirkuk, Iraq in July, 2011.

⁵⁸ There is a strong connection between these narratives and the shutdown of Operation Enduring Welcome and the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) Office in 2025. Particularly toxic right-wing and Christian nationalist ideologies dominated certain areas of the Afghan evacuation effort. While many Americans and allies across the ideological spectrum did stand up for our Afghan allies, many of whom the author was proud to serve alongside, the tragic reality is that many Americans serving in Afghanistan never truly stood by the Afghans as they claimed. Rather, Afghans were regarded as disposable pawns in a greater geopolitical and ideological chess game - or to be further exploited for one's own advantage. The fact that Americans' pets were given priority during the evacuation over Afghan people stands as a stark example of this fact. Deals were also made with the Taliban post-fall - strictly against both American and international law in amounts totaling millions of dollars - to ensure the welfare of animals left behind, unlike Afghans who were forced into fleeing or hiding. Additionally, as a matter of official Agency policy, active CIA officers were fired after the fall for so much as attempting to assist Afghans left behind. Substantial trafficking of Afghans also took place at the hands of these former "allies," particularly the sex trafficking of young Afghan women and girls through Doha - with certain known "anti-trafficking" organizations being actively involved in the abuses, including alleged forced abortions when the women and girls became pregnant (see Appendix 1, chapter 10 materials, as well as Appendix 2). In another instance, an officer was found to have filled an entire plane with young, particularly attractive Afghan women - all of whom had been personally selected by the officer. When asked about it, the officer replied that he, "was just building his own harem." The Pentagon appears to have merely reassigned the officer upon learning of his operations, in a manner that reminded the author very much of the Catholic Church reassigning a pedophile priest to a different parish. Following the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, multiple women who dissented on matters of human rights abuses or even expressed concern about evacuation activities or mission creep were told within these groups to, "go get raped in Gaza." The Islamophobia present in these groups and narratives greatly contributed to the closure of Operation Enduring Welcome. The reinstatement of the much hated and genocidal Taliban only served to fuel these Islamophobic narratives.

⁵⁹ 18 U.S. Code § 2381.

⁶⁰ See Pineapple Press, 2025.

⁶¹ This person is also connected to Elon Musk through mutual contact Phillip Reed (Reed, 2024). It would be terribly unfortunate if certain African countries (or other members of the Afghan Evacuation effort) spoke up on the matter regarding the smuggling and trafficking of Afghans within/between their borders.

⁶² This is hardly the first CIA usurpation of the abolitionist movement, nor of religious conviction (Uchitel, 2025; Smith, 2025). We've seen the specific script offered in Smith, 2025 earlier in this chapter and in the previous one, and through the incitement of anti-trans "grooming" rhetoric and

the QAnon mythos. Recall also how Joe Lonsdale, co-founder of CIA-backed Palantir, is connected to Thorn. The reader would be wise to recall the author's departure from a similar anti-trafficking organization due to the focus away from human trafficking to matters of national security and the events of October 7, 2023. See also Evans, 2022a; Devega, 2025; Whysosirius5, 2025; the reader is encouraged to follow the rabbit hole to its logical conclusion.

⁶³ See Footnote 28 for verification.

⁶⁴ See Footnotes 28 and 57 for justification.

⁶⁵ The author concurs with this analysis of Lt. Gen. Sayed Sami Sadat. Sadat considers himself to be an experienced operator and master of disguise. One day, the author was reviewing his recent profile viewers on LinkedIn for security purposes. While doing so, he recognized a familiar face, yet one associated with a false name and identity. It was Sadat. His disguise? Glasses.

⁶⁶ Ryan Mauro, founder of the Afghan Liberty Project and frequent Fox News and One America News guest, was also named in a FOIA request as having been instrumental in the 2025 Trump administration deportation efforts of Mahmoud Khalil in partnership with Canary Mission, Shiron Collective, and Betar USA, and is implicated in the deportation efforts of other Pro-Palestinian academics at American universities including Mohsen Mahdawi, Rümeyşa Öztürk, Momodou Taal, Dr. Badar Khan Suri, and Efe Ercelik (Thakker, 2025).

⁶⁷ See Sommer, 2024.

⁶⁸ Patel similarly worked with Tim Ballard at the White House during the first Trump administration (Real America's Voice). Patel's connection to Qatar is particularly interesting, given the country's role in laundering the Netanyahu regime's funds to Hamas for the October 7, 2023 attacks (Corn & Friedman, 2025). With that particular fact in mind, the reader should also note that Qatar was also a major financial hub of Al Qaeda and hosted 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed prior to the 9/11 attacks, from where he financed attackers on the World Trade Center (Roskam & Sherman, 2014; Scanzer, 2025; The 9/11 Commission, 2004). Hint hint – see Footnote 7. Once again, the reader would be wise to recall the author's departure from an "anti-trafficking" organization due to its prioritization of hunting Hamas operatives following the events of October 7, 2023. The smart thing to do at this point, Langley, is to simply burn these assets and let the author have his pound of flesh. See Footnotes 29 and 57.

⁶⁹ See ZeroHedge, 2025.

⁷⁰ See Gerstein & Cheney, 2025

⁷¹ For posterity, a number of remarkable synchronicities occurred at this precise moment – including the author being notified of successful delivery of a massive intelligence package that he had been working on arranging for over a year and a half. Without suggesting that the reader read too much into such coincidences, such synchronicities are well known to the author and are, in his opinion, worthy of further study to the intrepid – and open minded – researcher (see Clelland, 2020; Jung, 2010). Be warned, things get weird quickly.

⁷² The religious symbolism of the plan described here is worthy of further study. The sheer barbarism of the plan and the arrogant surety of those involved was plain, choreographed in countless ways to register with just as many different audiences, yet many of the most gullible still couldn't see it even when it was stamped upon their very foreheads (Rev. 13:16; Srivastava, 2024; Almond, 2025).

⁷³ See Appendix 1 materials for this chapter; specifically, see Bichler, 2019 and Wakatama, 2021 for guidance and then, as we say in the Agency, *good hunting* – it really is a target-rich environment out there.

Postscript: *Divide et Impera*

“I need to retire from retirement.”

– Sandra Day O’Connor

“Peace among worlds.”

**- The funniest piece of evidence ever submitted
to a war crimes tribunal**

I had this book neatly wrapped up when additional information became available. I believe the reader would benefit from this information so as to better understand the influence of organized crime and the shadow economy upon our world. For the sake of my beleaguered editor, I will attempt to keep this short, even if I must adopt a less formal tone to do so. All citations and evidence can be found in the appendices and bibliography. As always, I am once more sticking to what can be proven, and not to what I simply know to be true.

I also feel that it is important for the reader to understand that when I finally put pen to paper to start this book, I intended to simply examine the data that the abolition movement had generated over the past twenty-five years and see what could be concluded from that information: nothing more. I didn’t expect the data to reveal a vast transnational crime network, nor did I expect to be tipped off to all the things that I ultimately was. As I said in the acknowledgements, this was very much a collaborative effort that I simply got to put my name on at the end. I also certainly didn’t know that what I was working on was connected to my late wife’s work, nor to her assassination. I only found out about that a month and a half before publication. I will save my thoughts about that matter for another, more appropriate time.

For the record, future books in this series will involve far less tradecraft and fewer bombshell revelations – or so I hope. As I told Shawn VanDiver, President of #AfghanEvac, in the days leading up to the publication of this book I had no idea how I had been picked to carry this particular football, but that it was the most exhausting thing that I had ever done. He found that funny in a way that only a man who has suddenly found himself responsible for the safe relocation of hundreds of thousands of people without any funding or support could.

I mention Shawn for a reason: everything really started going off the rails beginning with my involvement in Afghanistan, and as more comes to light, I suspect we’ll learn of

even more horrors that were carried out in that country in our name – as well as in Iraq. In fact, I know that to be the case, and readers should prepare themselves for such an inevitability.

Several years ago, I received an audio file dated January 28, 2022, revealing the true reason for the withdrawal from Afghanistan: keeping American troops out of harm's way when the missiles finally started flying between Tehran and Tel Aviv. (As I've noted before, establishing a proper timeline is of particular importance in understanding how this nightmare came to be.) Intelligence had been recovered indicating that war was imminent, and so it was time to withdraw American and NATO forces and to place the Taliban back in charge, our Afghan allies be damned.

In June of 2025, my intelligence was proven right: American forces began withdrawing from the Middle East shortly before Israel and Iran began bombing each other (Israel striking first, of course). Russia, having siphoned all the drone technology it needed from Iran for its continued genocide of Ukraine, betrayed Iran, and Israel was offered up by the west in true Christian Zionist fashion to absorb the worst of Iran's wrath per the gameplan set up in Operation Timber Sycamore. Yet as soon as it began, it ended. Something was off, almost as if someone realized they had miscalculated something really important. (See Footnote 50 in Ch. 11.)

Also occurring in June of 2025 was the targeted political assassination of a Democratic Minnesota lawmaker, her husband, and the attempted assassination of another alongside his wife and child. The assassin was a devout Christian evangelist who had preached across the West Bank and Gaza attempting to convert Muslims to Christ and was a devoted supporter of Donald Trump. He was also, as it turns out, the owner of a private military contracting company in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) known as "Red Lion Security," a reference to the logo of the white supremacist Rhodesian government in exile. I suddenly remembered a strange conversation that I'd had with a former colleague sometime earlier: Sarah Adams had casually mentioned at one time that she had also been in the DRC. Recognizing, as we often say in this line of work, that there are no coincidences, I soon learned that her known associate, Erik Prince, had secured a rights deal for the DRC's vast natural resources in April while I was busy chasing potential false flags set up to appear as having come from ISIS-K.

Additional investigations into the 2024 coup attempt in the Congo are therefore warranted, especially with regard to any connections to Utah or Florida, as well as to the coup attempt in Haiti in July 2021 that resulted in the death of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, which can be traced directly back to Florida. Regarding the Haitian plot, it should be noted that Haitians had their immigration status revoked *en masse* (in the hundreds of thousands) by Donald Trump after having been subjected during the 2024 campaign to dehumanizing propaganda about eating peoples' pets – propaganda shared on social media by none other than at least one former CIA officer named in this book.

Yet, this connection revealed an even darker trend: it seemed that someone was recycling the old Gladio playbook. This was subsequently confirmed later in June when a 20 year-old Nazi aspirant with MAGA parents (based on social media posts) set a trap, killing two firefighters and critically wounding another. For those unfamiliar with Operation Gladio, Gladio was a CIA, NATO, and Vatican-backed "stay behind" program that was intended to be sprung should the Soviets invade and take parts of Western Europe. Sleeper cells would be activated after the fall to the Soviets, resulting in

bloodshed and massacres behind Russian lines. Unfortunately, it was activated for little more than political purposes: Gladio resulted in the “years of lead” in Italy, so called for the quantity of bullets that were exchanged in a domestic terrorist war between the left and right that greatly destabilized the country – all to maintain a “strategy of tension” to manipulate public opinion. It seems that warnings of Iranian and Muslim extremist sleeper cells were mere DARVO projection: the real threats that were activated were right-wing, Christian white supremacist operatives, eventually groomed to extremism by QAnon.

There’s a reason that I mention this, and it has to do with Webb, 2025a. The reader at this point is encouraged to look up this citation before going any further. You’ll never guess which of the author’s former colleagues Whitney Webb was referring to as planning to get Americans to “surrender your remaining freedoms in the name of fighting the war on ‘domestic terror’ with consent manufactured via an American Gladio style-op.”

Compounding this is the fact is that, as I write this, the House of Representatives has just voted to pass the so-called “big, beautiful bill,” enacting eugenicist policies and granting Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) a budget larger than that of the entire Marine Corps and of most global militaries. The ethnic cleansing of the United States and quite possibly the largest genocide the world has ever seen has begun, a mere six months after Donald Trump was sworn into office. Similarly, it’s evident that the same ICE/Customs and Border Patrol/Palantir system will create the same internal repression system under the Trump regime as is present in Russia and China. As we’ve seen, such systems are interrelated with human trafficking, depending on a system of slavery and trafficking in concentration camps in the United States and abroad in such countries such as Libya and Ecuador, having first been field-tested in Russia against Ukrainians and in the killing fields of Gaza, with the mass deportation system having been developed and tested in Afghanistan with Erik Prince’s involvement at every step of the way. The deployment of Gladio-style violence against American citizens makes perfect sense in this context, allowing violence against those who can’t otherwise be racially profiled and exiled or killed.

The brief, twelve-day war between the Iranian and Israeli regimes sheds additional light on this matter. Russia had telegraphed that it would abandon Iran should Israel attack it, ignoring the non-binding defense pact Russia and Iran had signed, and this came true as per the Timber Sycamore plan during the war. Israel was freed to bomb Iran unimpeded by its allies in the Kremlin, as the Kremlin had drained Iran of all of the drone technology it needed to produce those weapons domestically and continue unhampered in its genocidal attacks on Ukraine. Meanwhile, Trump was promoted to his preordained position as Christ-like peacemaker between the warring parties. Of course, that was hardly the case in reality, and Trump was caught bragging about coordinating with known American adversary Iran in order for Iran to bomb an American military base in Qatar, a minor offense known in the military and intelligence communities as treason. Once again, this reveals just how the entire world is ruled by a cabal of criminals, Donald Trump and the Ayatollah included.

Of particular importance here is not the Trump-Khomeini connection but rather the Kremlin-Likud connection, specifically, the alliance between the Russian and Israeli mafias that has developed since the end of World War II. While all ethnicities have

organized crime syndicates, the Jewish mafia, was essential to Allied success against the Nazis, having often partnered with American domestic law enforcement to report on German attempts to spy on and infiltrate the homeland – with key successes leading to the fall of the Third Reich. Much of this Jewish underworld was incorporated into the American intelligence community both during and after the war, including at the Central Intelligence Agency. This is important background in considering the Russo-Israeli mafia and what we learned about Bezmenov and the KGB in the previous chapter.

How this alliance came about can be found documented in the Appendix 1, Chapter 11 materials. What is significant to understand at this point is that this criminal network is the primary threat facing the globe as I finish this work. Following the establishment of Israel, the so-called “right of return” was exploited, allowing both Russian spies and less-than-reputable gangsters to find refuge in Israel (along with any pedophile claiming allegiance to the Jewish faith or identity). Israel was infiltrated by Russia much as America was. With the Jewish mafias post-world war having been absorbed into American and NATO intelligences, as well as the newly formed Israeli government and its array of military and intelligence services, the subsequent Russian infiltration was further facilitated by these networks that were already in place. American and European Christian Zionism, combined with guilt over the Shoah, and with Jewish Populations historically being forced to the outskirts of civilization and thus forced to turn to crime as a means of literal survival, made the process all the simpler: criticism of Israel became equivalent with antisemitism. It should surprise few that as of this writing, a majority of sex trafficking victims in Israel consist of Ukrainians, Russians, and Ethiopians – all locations where Oracle Israel’s systems and Lavender AI have been connected to wars and genocides.

Again, while noting that attention to the timeline is particularly important, Russian infiltration of the Israeli criminal/intelligence underworld propelled Netanyahu and his affiliated Likud organization into power following Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination, which occurred alongside Netanyahu’s now-admitted torpedoing of the Oslo Accords. From there, mafia rule was cemented in Israel much as it would later be cemented in America under Donald Trump. Of course, Russia’s eagerness to set up the Israeli state post-war should similarly be examined, as should their support of various Palestinian movements to further *divide* the world along this axis. (The Russian origins of the antisemitic *Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion* as well as the origins of Nazi ideology documented in the last chapter is similarly worth investigating.) Yes, dear westerner, you say you want to support human rights, but you also say you want to support the Jewish state – so choose and choose wisely, comrade, and rest assured that each choice isn’t connected to the end of a double-barreled shotgun.

The same tactic was deployed against supporters of Palestine, merely packaged differently: You say you want to liberate Palestine; surely you don’t care about those Zionist Ukronazis, do you? And please, pay no attention to the barrel bombs in Syria, the massacres in Mali, or those *Schutzstaffel* tattoos on our soldiers.

Thus, in case it’s not entirely clear (and from how hard it seems to get folks to understand this next point, it’s probably not), what the Russian-Israeli mafia did in light of the Timber Sycamore agenda is absolutely brilliant: *Divide et Impera*, “Divide and Conquer!” While simultaneously working together behind the scenes, they split the

world on an axis: supporters for Ukraine (generally aligned with Israel) versus supporters for Palestine (generally aligned with Russia), a division allowing for the conquest and genocide of both Ukraine and Palestine.

And the world fell for it. From observation of a lot of really disturbing conversations among otherwise intelligent people, even the Ukrainians and the Palestinians fell for it. Such is the power of active measures.

At present, the state of Israel serves as a trafficking flow valve: CSAM flows west, while intelligence (and the power of *kompromat* that accompanies the CSAM) flows east to Russia and China. While much of the infrastructure of this system appears to be based in Israel, it is clear that the infrastructure is indeed global, with key components based in California and elsewhere. In speaking with my colleagues about the nature of these cyber systems, one thing was agreed upon unanimously: the Mossad is the source of many of the current problems with those systems.

I feel that a story that I've been sitting on for some time is of particular relevance to this discussion. I believe I documented it in the Appendix 1, Chapter 11 materials, but if not, it should not be that difficult for additional confirmation to be found. Sometime around 2010 Donald Trump found himself in serious legal trouble with the American government. Prosecutors presented him with a choice: he could provide the prosecution with a certain phone number and his legal problems would disappear, or he could refuse and they would throw the book at him. Now, Trump himself didn't have the number the Obama administration was looking for, but he knew someone who did. That someone was a member of the Russian government. Not wanting to spend the rest of his days in prison, Trump agreed. A call was made, and the Russians, not wanting to lose their asset Krasnov, soon provided a phone number belonging to an individual living in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Of course, this unfortunate fact raises a number of questions such as, "why did the Russians have bin Laden's phone number?" and, "how did Donald Trump know who in the Russian government to call to get this number?" Then there are the issues raised given what we now know about the Russo-Israeli mafia, certain September 11, 2001 "conspiracy theories," and the administration of the Russian (and Iranian) shadow oil fleets via Oracle Israel. I'm also personally curious as to how that conversation never comes up in "Maya's" story in *Zero Dark Thirty*. For those investigating how a certain targeting officer might have been compromised, I suggest this is a good starting point.

This connection also explains the current massive expansion of America's ICE operations and the recent ballooning of their budget to a level beyond even that of the Marine Corps. When Donald Trump's former lawyer Rudy Guiliani (who has, incidentally, been disbarred, which resulted in much outcry from certain parties named here, for those keeping track) "ended" the mob war in New York City decades ago, the organized crime networks present at the time were operating hiring, construction, and real estate projects across the city. The war between mafias didn't end because of law enforcement action, or anything Guiliani himself did. Rather, it ended because a new group took over: the Russian-Israeli mob. (This is a pertinent time to revisit Footnote 7 in Chapter 11 regarding Bush's Project Hammer and how real estate was bought up after passage of the Patriot Act.)

From here, one of the real objectives behind Trump's ICE raids and mass deportation operations can be determined (as well as why both Russian *and* Israeli meddling can be

found in the 2016 and 2024 elections on their behalf). One need only look closely at who is being targeted, the companies and industries that the victims work for, their competitors, and which properties these individuals are being removed from (as well as where they're being detained/deported to, who operates those facilities, and in what capacities), and who in turn then buys these properties once they've been shuttered by the so-called authorities.

There are thousands of undocumented Israelis living in the United States and, more importantly, there are many more undocumented Russians, the latter having crossed into the country via the southern border with Mexico. (Approximately 30,500 Russian immigrants had been encountered along this border as of March 2023.) It's quite interesting, then, how ICE doesn't seem at all interested in these individuals. Recalling the mechanics of DARVO, every accusation is a confession: it seems that there certainly is an invasion occurring at the southern border.

It's all a mob operation, and it always has been.

The reader should also note how Rudy Giuliani benefited in his career from the September 11, 2001 attacks, earning the moniker "America's mayor" and an unsuccessful presidential run based solely around his response to the attacks of that day (again, see Footnote 7, Chapter 11). A deeper dive into the former prosecutor's mob connections is worthwhile and will almost certainly bear considerable fruit.

These revelations have consequences that extend far beyond the United States. The tragic reality is that no amount of annual GDP contribution to NATO, such as that demanded by the Russian-Israeli mobster occupying the White House as of this writing, will be able to topple or defend against the Russian bear as long as Israeli Unit 8200 is permitted to illegally trade Russian and Iranian shadow oil. Not 5%, not 10%, nor even 15% or 20%. It's a losing proposition. Israel has benefited from shadow fleet oil transactions more than anyone, including China – and they have no reason to stop unless serious and lasting consequences are brought to bear upon the genocidal apartheid state. Europe and its remaining allies, not to mention the entire world, simply must collectively recognize Israel as the criminal state that it is and abandon it. Only then can the shadow of global apartheid be lifted and America be made to reckon with its history that it currently refuses to acknowledge as it builds concentration camps to fuel its legacy of racism and slavery.

I'm not suggesting something dramatic here. Rather, this single Israeli intelligence unit set up the worst loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust as a false flag on their own soil (and we haven't even talked about that whole Hannibal directive thing, but it's documented within these pages) all to give the Russians more time to kill, rape, and steal (and then, to make things worse somehow, started another full scale genocide in Palestine (not to mention their crimes in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, et al.) to top it off. I'm not even technically asking here that they answer for their crimes, just that they don't trade shadow fleet oil anymore.

Now, there is a connection that I did not touch upon in the previous pages: that of the Christchurch massacre in 2019. As prosecutions play out and information is unsealed or declassified, the way this brutal mass murder of Muslims was planned and carried out via the Ethereum network detailed in the last chapter will become available. This also connects to the murder of a certain Healthcare CEO, and I suspect a great many of you will be shocked to learn who APT38, aka the "Lazarus Group," really owes their true

loyalty to (hint: it's North Korea). However, justice is a priority, and I must be careful not to hinder future prosecutions. And there should be a *lot* of prosecutions coming.

A lot of this horror ties back to apartheid South Africa, and I was not able to fully explore that connection in this work as much as I wish I could. The legacy of white supremacist ideology and colonialism is strong, and the connections to Russia and Israel should not be overlooked. In particular, I would focus on the connection between South African billionaire and anti-Ukraine zealot David Sacks as well as Marc Andreessen, implicated in the last chapter in major organized crime, and their connection to Bari Weiss: each having given somewhere between one and five million dollars to Weiss in March of 2022 to establish her “news” outlet, *The Free Press*. David Sacks is of course also strongly connected to Eldridge Colby, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Trump regime and a frequent target of so-called NAFO “bonkings.”

A final significant problem that I’ve encountered in writing this book that may benefit certain readers to learn about is that the art of disclosure is a weird process – and the truth, while it is certainly out there, is downright ridiculous once you fully understand it. For as it is emblazoned in the lobby of a certain building that I once frequented, *the truth shall set you free*. Unfortunately, the truth is going to really piss you off first, sort of like a good dad joke does. A lesson for those who are currently pursuing certain mysteries can be taken from this: y’all are taking things *way* too seriously. Learn to laugh a bit with what you’re studying, and things will become much clearer. I have found the gods to have quite an advanced sense of humor in my time dealing with the mysteries hidden throughout this book.

For example, let’s review what was uncovered in the last chapter alone: a vast, international conspiracy centering around a secret cabal of the Mossad and other Israeli interests – complete with pedophiles, sex traffickers, organ trafficking of murdered Palestinians, “space lasers,” microwave weapons that give people strokes, the creation of COVID-19, and a ritual child sex abuse scandal implicating the most prestigious Jewish families in Israel – that has pull not only in the Kremlin, the White House, and the Halls of Congress of all places, but that manipulates mass media and also secretly influences and even controls world events such as wars, genocide, and the outcomes of American elections through an advanced technological system that the general public has never even heard of until now.

That’s not just asinine, *that’s some David Duke-on-meth-and-ayahuasca level of nonsense*.

In fact, I found a quote of Duke’s speaking to this notion of a Russian, Jewish mafia. And yet, this is entirely what the totality of the evidence shows. We have the receipts for all of this. No reasonable person should believe such a grand conspiracy theory, and yet we must because it is no mere theory. In fact, the reality of its unreasonableness is all the more reason to believe it – such laughability makes it perfectly deniable, as was originally intended. In spy games, *it’s the perfect cover*.

As someone on Twitter once famously remarked, “nothing makes you sound crazier than knowing three things that the CIA has done and fully admitted to.” There’s a prior reference to manananggals in this book that’s a perfect example of this phenomenon. With this understanding in place, why would the Mossad, the KGB, Shin Bet, FSB, GRU, or SVR be any different? Because the Mossad and Shin Bet are “Jewish” organizations? If

I'm not mistaken, that's the literal definition of antisemitism – which has, of course, been weaponized against us.

The problem is thus more clearly elucidated: while Palestine must be freed from Israel and Ukraine liberated from its Russian occupation, so too must Israel be freed of its ruling mob bosses and Russia as well; not to mention the United States. Who knows how many other countries are in similar positions at this time, for we live in an era of mafia rule. With that in mind, I suspect that it's time for our own version of *divide et impera*: as discussed in the last chapter, if we target the networks and connections then the larger structure will, in time, fall.

Appendix 1

Supplementary Resources

Introduction

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Appendix 2

990 Tax Forms of Select “Anti-Trafficking” Organizations

(For context, see the section of Chapter 10 on Financial Intelligence)

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